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MARIAN ROOKE;

OR,

THE QUEST FOR FORTUNE.

A Tale of the Younger World.

BY HENRY SEDLEY.

* * * * I met a fool i' the forest,
A motley fool;—a miserable world!—
As I do live by food I met a fool
Who laid him down and bask'd him in the sun,
And rail'd on lady Fortune in good terms,
In good set terms,—and yet a motley fool.
"Good morrow, fool," quoth I: "No, sir," quoth he,
"Call me not fool till heaven hath sent me fortune:
* * * * * * * * *
And thereby hangs a tale."

AS YOU LIKE IT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON: SAMPSON LOW, SON, & MARSTON,
MILTON HOUSE, LUDGATE HILL.
1865.

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MARIAN ROOKE;

OR,

THE QUEST FOR FORTUNE.

Book the First.

CHAPTER I.

Far beyond the tossing Atlantic,—far beyond that chain of blue mountains which early settlers once thought the Ultima Thule of white encroachment,—far beyond the turbid stream whose vast dimensions make sea-coasts of its shores, and bear the spoils of a continent to the Gulf,—ay, and even far beyond that stern range of once impassable Rocky Mountains, the ever-restless Anglo-Saxon has pushed his way until there is scarcely a streamlet he has left unexplored, scarcely a square mile he has left untrodden. To speak of change in connection with America seems idle now, for the words have become all but synonymous. And yet these mutations, so far as they are connected with the occupation of fresh territory, must, through physical necessity, come to an end; the swifter the racer the sooner he comes to his goal,

and the rapidity of a nation's growth bespeaks an early maturity, if not a premature decay. There are those who may find abundant significance in the fact that all of the many vast tracts belonging to the United States which had undergone territorial organization, became permanently settled during the present decade. There were no more lands—none at least in the direction of the setting sun—to wrest from the unwilling savage, no more to conquer from the weaker neighbour; the exciting progress had come to an end at last, for the extraordinary people, who for an eventful century had been struggling, fighting, and floating their way westward. There was nothing further to be accomplished by those who had moved their national boundary from the Alleghanies to the Pacific.

Fifteen years ago it was not so. There were then far reaching spaces, where the elk and the antelope could feed in peace, and the bison still roam undisturbed. Spaces where no human beings save bands of the thin and scattered tribes of Sioux, Pawnees, and Apaches ever found their way to break with rude chase or ruder battle the solitude of nature. Spaces where we may suppose that for ages and ages back no sounds save those of nature's own everlasting processes had interrupted the solemn stillness. And these tracts might to-day have been equally vacant and silent,—might have been yet unoccupied, or, as some would have it, yet unpolluted by the

white man, but for one thing, which since 1492 has been working such wondrous effects upon mankind and their habitation,—the potent agent of *discovery*.

The same irresistible lure which wrought the fall of Montezuma and the Incas,—the sad possession which plunged Mexico and Peru into a sea of troubles, whence they have never altogether emerged, has prematurely developed and populated these occidental wilds which, by a natural process, and making all allowance for a prodigious immigration, would otherwise have remained virgin for another half century.

When the news reached the Atlantic States, in 1849, of Captain Sutter's discovery, with the subsequent report that portions of the soil of California were literally spangled with gold, a rush ensued for the favoured region, such as scarcely ever has occurred in history. Some crowded on board steamships bound for the Isthmus of Darien, with intention to cross to Panama, and again take ship to San Francisco. Some, with more patience or fewer dollars, contented themselves with sailing-ships going by the circuitous passage of the Horn. Some—and these latter included many a bold frontiersman, with plenty of pluck, but oftentimes no money at all—unable or unwilling to buy transport by sea, betook themselves to the more hazardous and more adventurous resource of crossing the plains.

It is true that nearly fifty years before such an

exploit had been attempted and performed. Americans, familiar with the annals of Congress,—and few of them are not,—knew that in 1803 "Captain Meriwether Lewis, of the 1st Regiment of Infantry, was appointed, with a party of men, to explore the river Missouri, from its mouth to its source, and crossing the highlands by the shortest portage, to seek the best water communication thence to the Pacific Ocean; and Lieutenant Clarke was appointed second in command." But this expedition, as well as others which succeeded it, besides being heavily armed, well disciplined, accompanied by skilful guides and trappers, and under government authority, accomplished, as was intended, most of its journey by water, a method of transit presenting many advantages over those whose sole aim was that of getting as quickly as possible from one point to another. The pilgrims of '49 sought only to get at the Californian gold, and cared little about the navigable facilities of the Missouri and Columbia rivers, or the flora and fauna to be found upon their banks. Thus they attempted short cuts, seeking to make their course coincide, as nearly as possible, with a parallel of latitude from their point of departure. Sometimes they succeeded, to the benefit of those who came after; but often in such efforts they paid the last penalty for their enterprise, and perished miserably in sterile waterless expanse or freezing mountain pass; so that not long ago there were tracks, marked

by the whitening bones of their first discoverers, which did sad service for later adventurers, who closely followed them as guides; a ghastly remembrancer of the episode in the Babes in the Wood, save that now there were no unthinking or pitying robins to cover or remove the relics of those who had gone before.

Some of these unfortunates had perished of hunger and thirst; for although in those days there was no lack of game in certain places, yet in the heart of the continent there are long stretches of country divided by no water-courses, and where, if agriculture ever flourishes hereafter, it must be with the aid of extensive irrigation. In the dry season these stretches are utterly destitute of water, and therefore as empty of fur or feather as Zahara itself. Into these inhospitable tracts, sometimes by miscalculation of their position, sometimes to avoid hostile Indians, wayfarers would stray and wander about until exhaustion forced them to lie down and die. There were also many cases where trains would be attacked and captured by the savages, whose numbers, now yearly decreasing, were then formidable, and who, possessing great numbers of fleet horses, were often able to gather in such force as to overcome resistance however brave, and almost invariably butchered whoever might have survived the fight.

All these dangers had been evaded by a little caravan, which, on a bright afternoon in June, 1850,

was slowly descending the last slopes which lead down from the Rocky Mountains on the further side of the South-west Pass. There were four large waggons, or ox-carts of the sort used in the western country, with huge wheels, and tall canvas tops. Each of these vehicles was drawn by oxen, which, albeit they showed signs of a heavy journey, were yet in tolerable condition. The third in the line was somewhat the larger of the four, and, in truth, its tent-like cover sheltered what constituted an apartment of very fair proportions, and which, as we shall see, was capable of affording no little comfort to its occupants. At the head of the column rode a large, sinewy man of fifty, who bestrode a powerful mule, and who was constantly scrutinizing—notwithstanding the rays of the sun which were slanting directly athwart his face—the sweep of plains and valleys which lay below. In his immediate rear, and in front of the waggons, walked pensively about a dozen head of cattle, on either side of whom there were a couple of men mounted on horses of the plains; while behind the waggons again rode half a dozen more, with rifle on shoulder, forming the end of the train.

For many weeks had the travellers been pressing their way towards the west. They had traversed monotonous plains, seemingly interminable, whose arid surfaces bore scarcely any vegetation but bushes of wild sage and the more obnoxious prickly pear.

They had crossed innumerable water-courses, fringed with the cotton-wood and the willow, sometimes by fording, sometimes by rafting, sometimes by horse-ferry constructed of their own resources. They had climbed many a steep hill, each like the other, with unvarying crests of cedar, pine, and wild mahogany. They had camped in many a little timber "island," whose welcome shelter and security in the otherwise unbroken plain invited their weary feet to tarry for the night. But, although they had experienced vicissitudes, had lost some of their cattle, had encountered many Indians, and had more than once been short of water, the little band had been spared graver disaster, and had lost none of their number by violence or disease. Their immunity was, no doubt, partly due to good fortune; but their numbers and somewhat formidable appearance had likewise been serviceable, for they were a powerful-looking body of men, and mustered over a dozen rifles. Moreover, the consequences of some of their recent acts of murder and plunder had begotten among the tribes of the plains a wholesome dread of their "Great Father" at Washington, and uncomfortable doubts as to the length of his arm. The passes of the great mountain range had become, under these circumstances, the most critical portion of the overland route; the distance from the settlements, and the all but impossibility of tracing out offenders, combining to multiply their dangers. No wonder,

then, that those who crossed the plains should be delighted when they had left the great central chain of the Rocky Mountains behind them.

The man at the head of the column turned in his saddle as if to escape for a moment the glare of the falling sun, and gazed at the scene behind him. He gazed upon a countless succession of hills, mere swells at first of red and brown, with clumps here and there of hardy red wood and scrawny mahogany, the foliage touched ever and anon with a glint of gold. Further off, as the panorama receded, the swells sharpened into points and crags crowned with bristling pines, and broken with masses of granite and flint, all bathed in hues of various purple. Furthest yet, but with numberless gradations between, rose the solemn, dark, blue peaks of the central range, crested with snow, which, suffused with the oblique rays of the sun, shot forth all manner of radiant colours. The spectator saw no more of earth beyond, nothing but the pure, delicate blue of the approaching evening; a background, indeed, of the same colour as the mountains, and yet so wonderfully in contrast.

The man gazed at the vista for a while, not altogether unconscious of its beauty,—and then suddenly gave vent to a cheery shout:—

"Hurrah, boys! We've passed the wust of it! We're gitten out o' the foot-hills, and to-night we'll sleep west o' the mountains!"

A responsive cheer broke from the men nearest the speaker, and those behind, readily guessing its purport, without quite catching the words which inspired it, took up the cry, and cheered until the welkin rang again. As the echoes subsided, a voice far away to the west took up the cry once more, and sent it back in tones, which, although distant, were distinct and clear; and directly after this again was heard the ringing bay of a dog.

"That's Luke!" said the pioneer of the column. And "That's Luke!" said the cattle-drivers behind, and the horsemen in the rear of the train. And "That's Luke," was repeated by two or three feminine voices, whilst their owners' heads were thrust forth from the waggon the third in the line.

"I hope he's got some venison," said one on the right. "I'm blamed tired of hung beef and pemmican for more'n a week, and only half a pint o' whiskey a day."

"Pshaw, Jabe Fitch," retorted his companion, a long Kentuckian, with an eye and face like a hawk. "Ye think o' nothing but the inside o' yer stomach; be thankful ye've got your scalp on the outside o' yer head. That's the first look out, goin' through the mountains."

"A place for everything, and everything in its place, Dick Railes," quoth the other, "as my old grandmother used to tell. When we was goin' through a skeary place, why, I say look out for

safety and nothin' else; when we've got out o' the woods, I allow we've got a right to holler!"

"Ay, but maybe we ain't out of 'em yet."

"No? Why Uncle Seth thinks there's ne'er an Injun 'twixt this and Stockton; that is, once out o' the foot-hills."

"Seth Armstrong 's 'cute, he is; but he don't allers know everythink. It ain't the call of an Illinise or Ohio farmer to be up to all the ins and outs o' the redskins, like as if he was raised on the frontier."

"You don't spose——"

"There may not be an Injun within a hundred mile on us; and then, agin, look thar." The speaker pointed as he spoke, and his interlocutor peered long and earnestly in the direction indicated ere he could make out what the practised eyes of the Kentuckian had detected some time before. Far away on the right, perhaps a couple of miles distant, so tiny as to be nearly invisible, curled upwards a spiral of smoke, blue and delicate against the green and brown of the earth and the foliage. Jabez Fitch looked for some time, and then drew a long breath.

"Thunder! hadn't we better let on to Uncle Seth?"

"No. Leastways not yet. Maybe Luke's lit a fire; tho' it ain't like him afore night. Maybe that ere simpleton's set the brush ablaze for fun. Maybe

one o' Luke's wads has done it. Anyhow we'll be up with him soon, and we can find out."

The sun was now sinking fast—to use the incorrect expression. As the train was continually descending it was shortening its daylight by a double process, and in a few minutes after the little colloquy described it had become almost dusky. Still it was light enough to see, a couple of hundred yards further on, a stream which ran directly across their path. It was an old acquaintance, the party having often passed it, miles behind, as a mountain brook, and had been beholden to its clear current for many a refreshing draught. It was growing more ambitious as it neared the plains, and although it had learned to be less noisy it was much deeper, and now boasted a width of some twenty yards. On its furthest bank from our travellers stood a little grove of cotton-wood trees, gracefully distributed in a curve of the stream; and beneath them could now be discerned a group consisting of five figures, two of which, however, alone were human.

The most conspicuous form was that of a young man full six feet high, who stood in advance of the others, leaning upon his rifle. He was attired, as were indeed most of the company, in a leathern or buckskin hunting shirt, and he wore Indian leggings and mocassins as the best protection against the prickly pear of the plains. Luke Armstrong might have seen some five-and-twenty summers, and as he

stood bareheaded, with his brown curling locks fluttering in the breeze, and a smile of welcome wreathing his handsome bronzed features, he looked the very ideal of manly strength and good humour.

A few paces behind was another youth apparently fast asleep. His limbs were stretched carelessly upon the ground, while his head was pillowed on the back of a huge black dog, who laid patiently enough, although his sagacious eyes and a scarcely perceptible movement of his bushy tail, showed plainly his interest in the approaching party. The head of the sleeper was covered with a thick shock of coarse red hair, and the cap which had fallen on his side was decorated with three or four feathers of great length and gaudy colours. His dress was similar to that of Luke, except that it was fantastically ornamented with beads, feathers, and bits of fur, in a manner usually considered more consonant with a barbarian than a civilized taste. At a short distance a couple of Mexican mustangs, secured by lariats, were nibbling the bright green herbage which carpeted the borders of the stream, and their saddles and bridles cast upon the ground completed the inanimate portion of the picture.

"Well, Luke, lad; what fortune?" cried Seth Armstrong, as his mule paused in splashing passage of the rivulet to bury its nose greedily in its cooling current.

"Why, as to grass and water, father, you see;

and as to game, look there." He pointed as he spoke to a fine elk, which swung from the lower branch of a neighbouring tree, and at whose foot there lay a considerable pile of feathered spoil. "We might have had two," continued Luke, regretfully. "He would be hunting squirrels and Calumet eagles for the sake of their tails, instead of for good 'hullsome meat to keep the pot bilin'."

"Darn the simpleton!" said Dick Railes, riding up. "He's allers spilin' sport. If I was you, Luke, I'd leave him with the train another time. There's plenty 'd be glad to chum with ye, on your huntin' days, without your takin' up with Silly Ike."

"No, no," replied Luke, good-naturedly, "don't be too hard on poor Ichabod. He's ready enough, generally, to do his share o' the work; and if he has a taste for gimcracks, he's no worse than lots o' gals Dick Railes would be the last to speak a harsh word of."

"That's so," said Jabez Fitch with some malice. "Kitty Armstrong's the only gal I ever see that didn't care for ribands and finery, and the only one Dick Railes can't git along with."

"Who told you how he gits along?" growled Dick in high dudgeon, but evidently discomfited by the stroke.

"One thing I can tell ye, boys," said Seth Armstrong, "and none on ye knows it better than Richard; and that is, ef we're all here now safe and

sound we have to thank Silly Ike for it. Them 'ere pesky Pawnees and Sioux would have belted our scalps, sure, more'n once but for him. Darn me if I hadn't rather cross the plains with a half-wit than a 'hull regiment of Uncle Sam's bluebottles."

"I do think you're right, father," said Luke. "It's queer that them red devils who won't respect a helpless woman or even a child in arms for that matter, daren't so much as lift a finger agin a witling that hain't got so much sense as either."

The party had in truth found reason to put the matter to a severe test. On one occasion in particular, during the first ten days of their journey from Liberty, rendered somewhat too bold by impunity, nearly the whole number had incautiously separated themselves from their train, leaving only Ichabod and two others with the females in charge of the cattle and waggons. Thus defenceless they were surprised by a band of some fifty Sioux, all well mounted and in their war-paint, who surrounded the train with frightful cries. Fortunately, several of their number understood enough English to converse intelligibly, and they speedily discovered the misfortune of poor Ichabod, who showed not the slightest trace of fear. By what persuasion or argument the dusky warriors arrived at their determination his companions never knew; but they were well satisfied when, after an animated discussion in their own tongue, the Indians galloped off as swiftly as they

had first approached, not, however, without a considerable exhibition of admiration and reverence towards Ichabod, received by him with great gravity and equanimity.

"And I'll tell ye another thing 'bout Silly Ike," cried the latter personage himself, suddenly raising his head, and showing that, with characteristic cunning, he had been listening to the conversation. His black pillow accepted the movement as giving leave of absence, for with a short, glad bark, he jumped up and ran to greet his various friends.

"I'll tell ye another thing 'bout Silly Ike," he repeated, sitting up cross-legged and wagging his red locks spitefully at Dick Railes. "He knows darned well who treats him right and who don't. He keeps a mem'ry longer'n from here to Fort Leavenworth, Silly Ike does. He kin talk Yankee, and he kin talk Chinay, and he kin talk Turkey, and he kin talk Ingun, he kin. He saved your scalps twice, and he kin do it agin. You're all darned smart, and there's only one on ye kin understand me, and that's Lion; he knows what I say, every word on't; don't ye, Lion?"

The dog came up and rubbed himself affectionately against his master's shoulder.

"That ain't what I was goin' to say, though," proceeded the latter, "and what it was is this. You're all on ye bound for Californy, to scratch and dig, and worry and burrow your souls out and all for

what? All for one thing. Most on ye'd sell your souls for't, I'll swear. Dick Railes would anyhow. Well now, what's the pint? Just this: Ike can give ye more gold than 'ud make that 'ere mountain over agin. Ike's got more'n 'ud make all the eagles and double eagles Uncle Sam ever kined at the mint in Philadelphy. Virgin gold, though, all rich and yaller——"

"Come, Ike," said Seth Armstrong, interrupting him kindly, and knowing by experience that on this subject the poor simpleton's haranguing was likely to prove exhaustless. "Come Ike, boy, it's most sundown, and we've got to make camp you know, and unyoke the critters and fix up a corral, and git supper and lots o' things. Ye can tell us about the gold when we're smokin' our pipes, bime bye, can't ye?"

"I will for you, Uncle Seth," answered Ichabod, quietly. "But remember, I don't mean to give it to any on 'em. They ain't fit for it. 'Twould kind of upset 'em; they're too weak-minded; they'd be for spendin' of it all in a minute, they would."

"Come on, Ike, we've had a good rest," cried Luke, "let's help to rouse out the teams."

Darkness was now coming on apace, and the travellers were actively engaged in making their preparations for the night. Indeed, as they had had many days of heavy work, Seth Armstrong proposed to pause for eight-and-forty hours, or thereabouts,

to give man and beast opportunity to recruit. For such a purpose few spots could have been discovered more favourable than that on which they now found themselves. There was abundant grazing for the cattle, plenty of water, and, although the site of their camp was heavily timbered, there were few trees and little brush for a long distance on either side to furnish cover for any possible lurking enemies. This last consideration, no less important than the others, determined the question of a more than usually protracted sojourn.

CHAPTER II.

Of the four waggons described as forming the train, one was exclusively devoted to carrying the provisions of the party, and was placed, when travelling, first in the line. The second was filled with farming tools, extra gear for the teams, and such supply of grain or other forage as could, from time to time, be obtained to make up for incidental scarcity on the march. For there were occasional wastes to traverse whereon the burning sun had shrivelled every blade of grass and absorbed every drop of moisture; places, to cross which in safety the wayfarer must provide food and water not only for himself but for his cattle. The last waggon was used for the conveyance of such personal luggage as each of the party was permitted to take, and contained besides, various articles of household furniture from the farmhouse of the Armstrongs on the banks of the Ohio. It had been a sore question with poor Mrs. Armstrong, which of these household gods to cherish and which to turn her back upon; which of the old familiar things to keep familiar still, and which to abandon for ever. Give her her way, indeed, and

she would have brought the old farmhouse itself, carefully packed in sections; ay, and the old red barn and the hen-house, and the pig-pen, and all the living things which inhabited them. But here Seth Armstrong was inexorable. He was sensible of yielding to a certain weakness in undertaking this hazardous journey at all; and he was, at all events, determined to assert his dignity and recompense his self-respect in the carrying out of details. The expedition had its origin simply in this wise—Luke Armstrong, like many other young men, and quite in a natural way, had taken the "California fever." All reasoning and entreaty to the contrary, go to the land of gold he would. Now, when his mother found this resolution inflexible, she at once resolved to carry out the only device whereby a separation from her first-born might be avoided; she determined on the transportation of the whole family to the Pacific shore; and, as in all her enterprises, when she set to work with a will, she succeeded. Not without difficulty, however, for Seth Armstrong was more strongly attached to his home than many of his countrymen are prone to be. He had left a farm in New England five-and-twenty years before; a farm where his people had dwelt and died for many generations. But the soil was flinty and ungenerous on the banks of the Connecticut, and it was bounteous and virgin on those of the Ohio. It had been a hard struggle for bare subsistence in the former

case, and life became easy and comfortable in the latter. So Seth Armstrong had struck down new roots, and had thriven and flourished apace until he was turned of fifty years of age. His family never had much money, perhaps, but they had always abundance to eat, to drink, and to wear. Seth was contented with his lot, and so was his wife, and so was their blue-eyed daughter, Kitty, and so—until Captain Sutter's lucky discovery—had been his son Luke. Be that as it might, they were now all of them infected with the gold fever. Seth, with many sighs, had, as he called it, "pulled up stakes," shipped his goods down the river to St. Louis, made up his party with a great deal of shrewdness and sagacity, and in the middle of the continent, with his Lares and Penates—such as were left of them—here he was. But he had obstinately refused to "tote" any articles excepting such as he could be convinced were absolutely necessary, and hence had arisen many a momentous conflict of opinion between himself and "mother." In these encounters, as has been suggested, Seth came off victorious in a general way; and if exceptions existed in trifling particulars, they were to be found in the third waggon of the train, which we now propose to describe.

Not to be paradoxical, it was a nondescript sort of a vehicle. It had been used on the journey as a residence—serving as kitchen for the entire party, sitting-room for the females, and, divided by a thick

canvas partition, as a chamber for the Armstrong family at night; the others, either finding room in the remaining waggons or sleeping, by preference, in the open air. But these were not the sole uses of the vehicle in question; for it had not only been applied to these necessary purposes, but had seen service on the march as a pontoon, and on one occasion, even more simply, as a boat. The truth was that Seth Armstrong, foreseeing a variety of exigencies wherein such a contrivance would be useful, had, with Luke's aid, built this remarkable waggon himself. It was entirely of home manufacture, with the exception, perhaps, of the springs, which were those of an ordinary heavy van, and from which the body could be readily detached. In the rear was a flight of steps similar to, although somewhat higher than, those of a common omnibus, and a window of half a dozen squares admitted light over the door. Towards the foremost part of the roof, which was of stout canvas, and upwards of seven feet high from the floor, a small stove-pipe emerged, and conducted smoke from the fire below. The whole structure might have been sixteen feet in length, by seven in width.

While the men were attending to the cattle and preparing their camp-fire to cook their game,—for preparations of meat were usually made in the open air,—a scene of no less activity was progressing in Castle Armstrong; for such was the name conferred

by the travellers on the edifice just described. The brilliant light of the moon and stars sufficed for all practical purposes out of doors, even without the help of the fire. Not so, however, within, where the artificial aid of a pair of candles was necessary to carry out the operations in progress. A fire had been lighted in the stove directly after the halt, and was now blazing briskly enough to set a large kettle of water singing aloud which was suspended over it. A comely, cherry-lipped girl, with sparkling blue eyes, and a striking resemblance to Luke Armstrong, was stirring a mixture intended to make "hoe-cake" on a dresser, which worked with a hinge, in the fore part of the vehicle; while a middle-aged, but not unprepossessing woman, whom it needs no second glance to identify as the mother of the younger one, was getting "spiders" and gridirons, and other indescribable utensils, ready for the evening meal. At the other end of the apartment, and her features somewhat obscured, as the candles stood on a table close by Kitty Armstrong, was the tall figure of another girl, stooping to get something out from one of the drawers which were fitted under each of the berths. Such was the picture presented to Luke Armstrong as, after unyoking and settling the oxen, he clambered up to the seat, and thrust his good-humoured face into the waggon.

"Good evening, mother!" cried he. "We've got such a beautiful doe! And the fires are lit, and

Bridget and Jabe are cutting the steaks, and the Doctor and Dick Railes are squabbling about the distance to Salt Lake, and father's found an old corral for the critters! I hope you're most ready with the hoe-cake, for we've all got such famous appetites!"

"All right, Sonny," responded the matron. "We ain't usually much behind the men folks, 'specially at cookin' time. Father says we're goin' to rest here a spell."

"Yes, we're through the Great Pass, and a right smart bit on our way. There ain't much more chance of stumblin' agen the red skins, and the cattle need a day or two to pick up."

"I'm so glad," exulted Kitty Armstrong. "I'm sick and tired of this joggle joggle, which makes you feel jest like crossing Lake Michigan. Now, you Luke," she continued, coming up and kissing his brown cheek, "where's my present?"

"Choose."

"No, I won't choose hands, for you always change 'em. Anyhow, Mary Anne get's the prettiest. Let's see!"

"No, no, honour bright. Look, I won't stir after you pick, 'cept to give it to you."

"Well, then, left."

"Here you are then, Kitty, left."

Luke handed his sister a band or circlet of curious shape, but evidently intended for the head. It con-

sisted of some sort of soft skin, adorned with porcupine quills, and enriched at the centre by a noble plume from the eagle, known among the Indians as the Calumet.

"Why, Luke!" cried the girl in surprise, not unmingled with alarm. "Where did you find it?"

"In the mountains this morning. I thought Ike had tomfoolery enough stuck about him, and 'twould better suit you. I think it's a chief's."

"Then there are Indians near us, after all?"

"How d'ye make that out, silly? The loser may be dead or hundreds of miles away."

"I hope he is—the last anyhow. But what have you got for Mary Anne?"

"Nuthin' much," said Luke, a flush warming his frank brow, "only a bunch of little mountain posies. Won't you take 'em, Mary Anne?"

The tall girl came forward at the invitation, and extended her hand. She was dark—not of Luke's sun-bronzed hue—but with a complexion of clear olive, through which the blood could be traced as if the skin were that of the purest blonde. Like Kitty, she wore a plain stuff gown, happily unextended by crinoline; and her head carried only its own ample ornament. But, unlike Kitty, her manner was distinguished, and her carriage, without suggesting the slightest affectation, was almost fit for a queen. Her hand, too, which was stretched to take the proffered nosegay, was tapering and delicate. Whoever or

whatever Mary Anne might be, she was one of those whom no humbleness of dress or situation can make common; no disenchanting adjuncts in the way of domestic surroundings can altogether deprive of dignity.

"Thank you very much, Luke," she said in a low, musical voice. "They can scarcely be sweeter than the last ones were."

"I have to take what I can find, Mary Anne," said Luke, unconsciously tuning his voice into the same key. "Flowers are scarce on the dry prairie, but these came from the mountains."

"And yet their scent is like magnolia blossoms," she went on. "They remind me of the South."

"Put them in your hair, Mary Anne," said Luke; "we're to have a spree to-night,—a kind of a blow out to celebrate our safe crossin' of the mountains,—so you girls can make yourselves as pretty as you please."

"Well, then, be off, Luke," exclaimed his mother, "and don't be a henderin' of 'em, for they've lots of chores* to do, and father'll be hollerin' for supper."

Luke reluctantly descended from his perch, and joined the active party outside. By this time a large fire was blazing merrily at a convenient distance from the banks of the stream, the cattle were comfortably settled for the night, buffalo robes spread upon the ground, and preparations for a feast in active progress. Bridget, a stout Irish lass, long

* American—Anglice, *chars*.

the faithful follower of the Armstrong family, was busily getting steaks from the elk, and preparing a generous number of the birds for a "stew" in a huge iron pot. Some of the men were still engaged at various necessary labours, while others, having finished their share of the work, were stretched on skins before the fire. Not that its heat was much needed, but the habit of forming a circle around the blazing logs was strong, and all readily fell into it. This circle, indeed, constituted a sort of evening parliament whereat the discoveries and adventures of the day, and the projects and chances of the morrow, were regularly debated and determined.

It has been remarked that Seth Armstrong had made up his party with not a little sagacity. The primary objects were of course security and efficiency; that is, numbers sufficient to deter attack or resist it, and yet not too many to endanger quarrels or divided counsels; and discreet selection, with a view to avoid the incumbrance of indolent, sickly, or otherwise objectionable companions. Seth was no great expert himself in frontier work, albeit a tolerable woodsman, a stanch husbandman, and a steady shot. He had, however, a great deal of self-reliance, and liked to cherish it. When he determined to cross the continent, he had first provided himself with a large map, which was as accurate as a sketch of a partly unexplored country on a scale of fifty miles to the inch is likely to be. Such as it was, he had

given it careful and protracted study, measured the distances his teams were likely to accomplish in various hypothetical periods, considered the relative positions of well-known constellations with reference to their line of march at such epochs, and, in general, so fortified himself as to feel sure that he would not convey his charge to the Russian possessions or the city of Mexico. Having made this progress, Seth made it his business to seek out some one who had been on the plains before, and, whatever his other knowledge or deficiencies, should have experience at all events in this. He had no great difficulty in finding such an assistant in the long Kentuckian called Dick Railes, a personage whom it would not have been difficult to persuade to undertake a journey to any part of the habitable, or for that matter, uninhabitable globe, but who, if he had a choice at that time for one thing over another, it was to try his luck in the gold diggings of California. Dick had been as far as the Rocky Mountains as long ago as '40, he said; and once he'd been across to the highest peak away to the northward, when the Pathfinder set up the proud banner of our universal nation on that uncomfortable and hitherto inaccessible acclivity. Dick had, however, sundry little weaknesses and eccentricities of temper; and his knowledge was, moreover, of a merely popular character; highly useful, no doubt, but not precisely of that exhaustive description which one likes to depend

upon exclusively when life, fortune, and worldly goods are at issue. This is perhaps not exactly the form wherein Seth would have set forth what he felt to be a deficiency in the material of his party; still it expresses substantially his view of the case. He therefore considered himself very fortunate when he stumbled upon a man of science, who was not only capable of taking observations with a theodolite or a sextant, but who also was seeking a party with whom to cross the plains. This was one Doctor Landale, a hard-headed Scotchman of forty, who had been bred a surgeon, had followed his profession zealously for a dozen years, and had taken a fancy to turn civil engineer at six-and-thirty. Whether this caprice was consequent upon a determination to visit new countries, where he might wisely have two strings to his bow, did not appear; be that as it may, honest Seth satisfied himself after his own fashion of the doctor's capacity, most especially with reference to exact science; and the sight of a transit instrument, a theodolite, a dumpy level (Troughton and Simms'), together with that of a formidable set of draughting instruments, quite took his confidence by storm. Furthermore, the doctor agreed to pay a certain sum towards the expenses of transport and provision, which sum being rather in excess of what he got from others of the party who had no special attainments to enhance the mercantile value of their society, satisfied the thrifty yeoman remarkably well.

Besides those already mentioned, there were two young men, farmer's sons, and friends of Luke from Ohio; a quaint and good-humoured looking person, who described himself as having lately "kept store" at Biddeford, Maine; an enormously powerful backwoodsman, who "belonged" in one of the western counties of Illinois; a couple of sturdy Irishmen, who "worked their passage" by special agreement with Seth Armstrong; and, lastly, a slight young man from Massachusetts, called Hugh Gifford.

When Luke descended from the waggon he found the party in high spirits, and interested in a not unusual species of discussion between Dr. Landale and Dick Railes.

"'Spose now, doctor, you was to lose your th'oderlite and sextant and the fixins, and was to git stuck in the middle of the pararie without 'em, then whar would you be? I could find *my* way by the sun, and the trees, and the different kinds o' sile, and the lay of the land; but whar would *you* be?"

"I'd just find my road without either of the tools you mention, and without either of yours for that matter, although the sun is a very good guide. Why, man, a couple of poles and a lighted brand would give us the meridian any night we could see the north star; and it's easy enough to keep a dead reckoning with such steady travellers as Seth Armstrong's oxen."

"Wall, if you could git along so well without 'em,

whar's the use o' the gimcracks, so much frettin' and worryin' to carry 'em safe, and you bilin' over half the time about their gittin' out of 'justment, and local attraction disturbin' the needle, and what not. I take it a straight eye and a clear head is as good measures for lines and distances as all the science things you kin scare up. I don't see no use in 'em 'cept to scare off the Injuns, p'raps, who allus thinks a round thing with a hole int's bound to go off."

"If you were squatting on a quarter section, Master Railes, with pushing neighbours on either side, or coming on a savage coast in winter, when a mile or so might make the difference between death and safety, you'd want something more mathematical, I'm thinking, than clear heads and straight eyes to demonstrate your position."

"As to the quarter sections, they run 'em off down our way without no spy-glasses; jest a jacob-staff and a compass, and what they call a Gunter's chain; eighty on 'em on a side, and then blaze a tree. They don't use no spy-glasses like your'n, nor no triangulations."

"None that you see, perhaps. To simplify the work, as they think, they may divide the square mile as you say with nothing more than the field-compass and chain; but the lines of the townships, at least, are located more accurately, or the sum of errors would lead to hopeless confusion. The system you quote is a bungling one at best, and could only

answer in a new country, where land is abundant and claimants few."

"And as to savage coasts," continued the Kentuckian, pursuing the thread of his former reply, "I don't know nuthin' about 'em, and I don't want to know nuthin'. Pararies and Injuns is savage enough for me. I don't want no water round that ain't fresh, I don't. What it's made for I can't see, 'cept it is to give the folks in the Atlantic States an excuse to tax the 'hull country for building ships and forts that ain't wanted."

"Why, Dick," cried Luke Armstrong, laughing, "you wouldn't leave the country without a navy, would you? Or the coasts and sea-ports without defences?"

"What good does the navy or the forts do us out here?" queried Mr. Railes, obstinately. "We don't own no ships to be purtected; we ain't afraid of nobody else's ships bombardin' our towns. We air an agricultooral people, we air; and we air a goin' on to open up the boundless west, conquerin' and to conquer until the 'hull continent clear to the Pacific is filled with states as fine and as flourishin' as old Kentucky. Take kear o' number one, that's my idee; we don't wan't no ships to do that."

"Hooray!" shouted Ichabod, midway in a series of wild gambols with the dog Lion. "Hooray for Uncle Sam! Hooray for the universal Yankee nation! Hooray for the 'Merikun eagle!' We'll

all jest sail in and take the 'hull continent, and drive out the Britishers, and the greasers, and annex Canady, and gobble up Cuby, and clean aout the 'hull lot on 'em! We'll live on milk and honey, and elk-meat and hoe-cake, and never do any work; and every man shall have ten farms afore he's had time to cultivate one; and we'll all go to Congress and make new laws every day; and we'll have a new president once a week, and Ike shall be the first one, and Lion the second! Hooray!"

And Ike commenced an active pantomime, whereof the principal feature consisted in enveloping himself in a buffalo robe and pretending to be a bear, to the great joy but affected fury of Lion.

"Two on one's too many," said Luke, with his good-natured laugh. "The Doctor can't argue with Ike and you both, Dick. He'll hev' to give in."

"Dick's more'n half right," growled Nahum Pelter, the gentleman from Illinois, preceding his opinion with an appalling extrusion of tobacco juice. "We don't want no ships 'cept on the great lakes. We *must* have 'em thar to keep the Britishers in order."

"The only good I could ever see in ships," proceeded Dick Railes, thus heavily reinforced, "is to tote cotton and tobacco; and furrin' ships might as well do that as any others. Labour's cheaper with them, and, naterally, they can kerry the prodoose for less money."

"And sposin' there was a war with the nation

ownin' the ships?" put Jabez Fitch, with the air of a man having a thirst for useful information.

"Then," answered Dick, confidently, "then we'd jest hive our stuff till the fightin' was over. We could git along better without their ships than they could git along without our cotton and terbacker."

"Arter all, Dick Railes," said Seth Armstrong, joining in the discussion, "arter all you can't be in right down airnest in what you say. If we hadn't had no ships and no commerce, we mightn't have had the population or the money to set up all these here great Western States at all. Where would have been the wealth of New England if it hadn't been for her trade with the East and West Indies? And where would have been the honour of the nation ef we hadn't had war ships ready when we fit agen impressment and the right of search in '14? What's the difference where the ships is built or where they go, so long's they're owned by and fightin' for the 'hull country?"

"The difference is," said Mr. Railes, with a dogmatic evasion of the issue, "the difference is that the South and West is self-supportin', and the North and East ain't."

"Look a hear," exclaimed Nahum Pelter, ejecting his customary *avant courier;* "look a hear! We kin live on this ere pararie without any help from the Yankee States or rotten old Europe either. We kin find elk, and antelope, and buffalo, and bar enough

to eat, and their skins will keep us warm. We can git corn almost for nothin', for one man's sowin' 'll feed ten. If you poke round here long enough, I'll find ye coal, and lead, and sulphur, and nitre, and iron; let alone red cinnabar, copper, or, for the matter o' that, what we're all huntin' for, gold. Now if we've got all we want, and other folks come along and want to trade with us, it stands to reason that to do't is for *their* advantage, and not for our'n."

"That's so," quoth Dick Railes, approvingly.

"You can't find no gold," cried Ichabod. "Nobody knows where the gold is but Ike. He knows where there's mountains of it—more'n ever was found in Indy or Peroo; enough to make ye all so blamed rich ye'd cook yer elk in gold pots, and wear crowns from now to never. Ike knows where it is, only 'twould kind a spile ye and make ye wild to let ye have it, so he'll keep it for himself."

"What you say, Pelter," said Seth, "*sounds* reasonable enough, but I'm afeard it's one-sided, arter all. What do *you* think about it, Mr. Gifford?" he continued to the young man from Massachusetts, who had hitherto listened, without taking part in the discussion.

"I?" answered the latter. "Why, Mr. Armstrong, I should say that the West can't do without the ships, nor the East without the prairies."

"A politic conclusion, Mr. Gifford," said Dr. Landale, "and one which does credit to your tact,

if it be not altogether convincing to either disputant."

"Why, as to that, who agrees or disagrees with two disputants never satisfies either. However, I expressed my belief. You have been long enough with us now to know that there are great differences of opinion among the Americans."

"To be sure, to be sure," replied the Doctor. "Large country—mixed people—miscellaneous educations—*tot homines, tot sententiæ.*"

"What's that?" asked Mr. Pelter, in an undertone, of Dick Railes.

"Something about the th'odolite," explained the latter.

"Now then, gentlemen, supper, supper!" cried Seth Armstrong. "Here's mother and the gals bringin' the tea and the hoe-cakes cooked, and Bridget's got steaks enough cut for a regiment."

"Supper with all my heart," said the Doctor. "I'd much rather discuss elk steaks than abstract questions, however interesting or instructively set forth."

"Amen," said Luke. "Besides, this is a night of jollity, to celebrate gettin' safe through the mountains. Come, Dick, extra whiskey to-night, you know."

"That suits me," responded Mr. Railes, complacently.

"And won't hurt none on us for once," remarked

Seth. "I ain't one o' these kind o' men who'd keep the boys from a cheerful drop now and agin."

"Whiskey for Ike," chimed in that personage; "Whiskey for Ike, and a drop for Lion. Whatever Ike gits—elk or teal, hoe-cake or whiskey—Lion has some too."

"Now, boys, here's the tea comin', continued Seth. "Take tea with supper, and keep your whiskey for your pipes arterwards. Who has the fust watch to-night, Luke?"

"Mr. Gifford and Ike."

"That's well. They ain't so like to need sleep, p'raps, as the rest. Now then, mother, we're all sharp-set enough for two. Set the steaks a brilin', Bridget, and git out the tea cups."

These latter consisted of tins, which served for all drinkables alike, and were soon in use, together with plates of the same durable material. The supper was abundant and savoury, and high good-humour prevailed among the party. Lion was not forgotten by his zealous friend, who, after giving the honest creature his fill, produced a violin, on which he played with considerable skill and facility. Then there were songs about Old Virginny, and Carolina, and Tennessee, and the Ohio River, and yaller gals, and old homes, *ad libitum*. Afterwards there were some rude but jovial and hearty essays at dancing, and when the dancers were too weary to trip it longer, they reclined on their buffalo robes and took

to story-telling. So that it was very late when the festivities at last came to a close, and the moon went to rest, and left the stars to shine down in unobstructed splendour upon the little camp, which now became as placid and still as it had lately been full of life and merriment.

CHAPTER III.

A LONG journey by land has many features in common with a long passage by sea. There are the same likes and dislikes, the same jealousies and repinings, the same horror of particular faces and expressions which one gets to loathe in the most uncharitable manner, to be requited, perchance, by being loathed in return. There are, too, the same speedy detections of sympathy by kindred natures, the same binding together of tastes, and amusements, and caprices; so that nothing is more frequent on sea or shore than to find a set of people split into little cliques and factions, each as complete in itself, and repellant of the others, as if the different members were of opposite and hostile nationalities. The land passage has the advantage of the water in that it presents more variety of scenery, and, generally speaking, entails more physical exertion,—circumstances less conducive to *ennui* than the dreary monotone and listless apathy of the ocean are apt to be; it has not, however, the same opportunities which state-rooms and cabins afford, either for solitary communing or relief from enforced companionship.

When the party of Seth Armstrong first set forth from St. Louis there were, as was quite natural, a great many proffers of attention and minor gallantry to the young girl called Mary Anne from the men, most of whom were young, and, of the four women of the party, only herself and Kitty Armstrong being eligible. Such advances the girl had received with simple courtesy, speaking kindly to all without *hauteur* or reserve, but yet managing, with a tact rather remarkable at nineteen, to prevent either from considering himself peculiarly favoured by encouragement. Leading questions, such as most Americans below a certain grade of intelligence and education are by no means too delicate in withholding, she contrived, without giving offence, to avoid. Conversation which tended to elicit any exposition of her past life she would ingeniously divert, or, as a last resort, would find refuge in silence. Thus it happened that, by the time the caravan had reached the mountains, while the whole party knew all about the Armstrongs—were well versed in the life and adventures of Dick Railes and Jabe Fitch—had been favoured with an autobiography in detail of Mr. Nahum Pelter—were conversant with the business speculations and vicissitudes of the gentleman from Biddeford—had even become familiar with the mingled web of physic and mensuration, wherein the reminiscences of the cautious Scotchman, Dr. Landale, were interwoven—they yet knew

nothing at all about the young girl called Mary Anne.

What was most singular was that Seth Armstrong knew almost as little about her as any one else.

"Miss Mary Anne is, I presume, your second daughter?" queried the Doctor, on the second day of the journey.

"Miss Mary Anne? My darter? Wall, no, I expect she's—that is, I dunno—wall, I calculate she's Mary Anne."

With which explanation the Doctor, perforce, remained satisfied; for an introductory "hem" wherewith he prefaced another threatened interrogatory so alarmed the worthy farmer that, unused to diplomatic evasions, he hastily beat a retreat under pretence of "seein' to the tire of that ere hindermost waggon."

No one had been more successful than the Doctor; so that Mary Anne continued, so far as the knowledge of the company was concerned, to be Mary Anne;—"only this and nothing more."

The truth was that Mr. Armstrong's acquaintance with the young woman was scarcely a day older than that of any member of the party; and when he hesitated or prevaricated respecting her surname, it was for a reason no more occult than that he simply did not know it.

On the day before the one fixed for setting out, she came to the obscure hotel which was the last

rendezvous of his party, and asked to see him alone.

"I wish to go across the plains," she said, "to California. I have money—can pay for the trouble and expense I may cause. You are going—you have a wife and daughter—let me go with you."

"Why," he hesitated, "it's very sudden—the last minute like—'haint ye got no friends? I mean no men-folks?"

"No!" the girl answered; "none." She went on, wringing her hands with a kind of terror, and looking over her shoulder as if she expected to be interrupted. "You *must* take me. I must leave this place at once. It is death to me to stay here longer."

The farmer looked at her hands. There were two or three handsome diamonds upon them. Then he looked at her attire. She was in mourning, her dress of a rich dark material, more shapely and stylish, he thought, than any his Kitty had ever worn. Altogether she looked a singular person to be wishing to cross the plains. Why did'nt she go down to Orleans and take the steamer, and cross the Isthmus? She read his thoughts.

"Don't hesitate; you musn't, indeed you musn't. I'll pay well—believe me—and in advance, too. I tell you I must leave Missouri—leave the neighbourhood of the Mississippi. I'll give very, very little trouble, and I'll help your wife and daughter. I can be very useful—and—and—see here!"

Her trembling fingers had sought and opened a reticule, and she drew forth a large purple silk purse. It was filled with golden eagles.

"It's curus," thought Seth Armstrong; "dreadful curus." Then aloud and suddenly, "Ye 'haint done nuthin' you're ashamed on, and hev' to run away to escape the consequences, hev' ye; cos——"

"No, no, no!" cried she. "I have never done a wrong to man or woman! Never! so help me Heaven, never! But——"

She put her face close to Seth's, and whispered a sentence in his ear.

"It's impossible!" he exclaimed; and then again, after a pause, "It can't be."

"As I am a woman it is true."

Another pause longer than before. The farmer put his face in his two hands, cogitated awhile, and then spoke.

"I'll take ye."

"You will! Oh thanks — thanks — I'll give you——"

"I don't want none o' your money. If you've a mind to help mother and Kitty, you may."

And so it was that Mary Anne had joined the party. She told Seth her Christian name—no other —and by it he introduced her to his helpmate. What further explanations he vouchsafed that exacting lady need not here be recited; enough that they were sufficient to obtain her acquiescence in the

arrangement he had made. She offered no objections, and but one recommendation, namely, that the young lady should take off them 'ere duds and put on others more suitable for the journey; so that the prompt adoption of her suggestion made matters quite amicable all round.

Of all the young men who surrounded her, the one who at the outset had treated Mary Anne with the greatest distance was Hugh Gifford. He was not disrespectful certainly, or even indifferent towards her; for when they casually met he omitted no courtesy due to a lady whose position was thoroughly defined and understood. But beyond this he made no step. He contented himself with a grave, commonplace civility, and there paused. Perhaps he admired her rather striking appearance, and that with something of an artist's eye. But no look, no tone, no lingering glance even, which might have been supposed unseen, betrayed such a feeling. Luke Armstrong, who made not the slightest effort to hide his own honest admiration of the girl, expressed surprise not unmingled with indignation at Gifford's insensibility. "There's a gal," he thought, "who steps like a fawn, and talks like a runnin' brook, and who's got a shape and an eye enough to set a man a-fire, and that there young Yankee looks at her for all the world as if she was cut out of a block of ice."

It is one of the many strange perversities of our

common nature to seek to make revelations to those who never ask us questions. Had Gifford approached her as the others had, he would have been received in like manner, except, indeed, that his superior education and breeding would have doubtless gained him a gentler spiriting. But the very reserve which tinged his manner, and which would have interposed an insuperable barrier to the confidence of a woman of coarser nature, put Mary Anne at ease with him. Indeed, she felt better acquainted with Gifford before he had spoken a hundred words to her, than weeks of daily intercourse caused her to feel with the others.

Little by little, as time wore on, they began to talk and to pick up, at first in an odd desultory way, some knowledge each of the other. Sometimes the occasion would be the sudden coming upon some glorious view, when she would involuntarily glance quickly about to catch his eye, and then as swiftly look away again. Sometimes a curious flower or some strange mineral would be discovered, and would draw together as such things will those who, alone of the party save Dr. Landale, could hazard conjecture as to its classification or species. Sometimes the Doctor—who kept a chart and a log, marking the former and making his entries in the latter as the courses and distances for each day were computed—would challenge them to inspect his work, and thus generate discussion. But most frequently these

confidences were interchanged on long starry evenings, when it happened that Gifford was on watch and the rest were quiet in sleep. It was the custom of the party to keep watch and ward as on shipboard—a measure highly necessary where Indians as well as wild animals abound—and Ichabod had been early detailed with Gifford. The poor fellow's misfortune did not affect his usefulness in this or in many other respects; unless he had been, as sometimes happened, over-fatigued; the mind would then fail to control the body, and he would sink into heavy slumbers. However, this watch was numerically stronger than the others, since it included Lion; and, as the dog never slept when his master did, there was no loss of vigilance involved. Mary Anne had kindled in the simple mind of Kitty Armstrong some little taste for astronomy; and the two would emerge from the Castle when all was silent to tell over and watch the constellations. Kitty would soon weary, however, even with the most interesting of teachers, and she would often fall asleep by the campfire. Occasionally, Seth Armstrong, anxious for the safety of his flock, would turn out from his comfortable berth and take a survey of the state of things; but as he liked Kitty to "get all the learnin' she could," and saw no harm "so long as the gals was together," he never objected to these midnight gatherings.

It was on such an occasion, and on a night like that which followed the merriment described in the

last Chapter, that Hugh Gifford told Mary Anne something of his early life.

They had been speaking of the motives which had led the little company to brave the toils and dangers of their present journey.

"The father would rather be with his family, the mother will not be separated from her son, the son alone avows his real object, which is, after all, the object of all—gold. They have nothing else to care for—nothing else to hope for. It is what the children have heard of all their lives as the sole end and goal of existence. The yeoman wants it, the backwoodsman wants it, the trader wants it, the very half-wit here wants it, as his poor childish talk, continually dwelling on the subject, proves."

"And do not you, too, want it?" asked Mary Anne, gravely.

"I? More than all the others. What am I without it? Nothing. What, in this land can I be with it? Everything."

"I am sorry."

"Sorry?"

"I should have hoped you had some nobler thought for your future; some purer ambition, some higher aspiration?"

"Why go to California, but for gold?"

"Ah, but only as a means to an end. Not for its own sordid sake, but to enable you to do good. To relieve undeserved suffering by making some forlorn

ones happy. To help obscure merit onward and upward in its struggle to rise above the world, which might otherwise scorn and trample upon it. Is there not more pleasure in this than in mere wealth for its own sake?"

"Perhaps. I think I should like to do good. But one must first have the means. It is idle to speculate on the possible good a man might do while he continues without them."

"You have—pardon me—you have suffered much from the want of money perhaps?"

"Yes and no. Others have been poorer than I—plenty, no doubt, more deserving. But I doubt that many have felt poverty more keenly—have craved so much for wealth, not caring a straw for the luxury it would buy, but to escape the scorn of the vulgar and ignoble whose presence I could not escape; the low and mean, who hated me because they thought me educated without being rich, and who sneered at the idea of a pauper being proud."

"But you come from Massachusetts, the state which spends so much money for free schools—the state which of all others should hold education and brain in the highest esteem—the state where money as compared with intelligence should carry lowest honour."

"It may be so in theory, I only know what it is in practice. I only know that from the schools themselves, where the rich men's sons lord it in

pitying scorn over their poorer mates, to the churches and courts, and marts of trade, gold is the measure of each man's standing, reputation, influence. Is this unnatural? It is such a measure for the simplest of reasons—because there is no other."

"I have read much of social life in New England, and what I have read scarcely consists with what you say. Has not your case been a peculiar one? Have you not been—if you will let me say so—have you not been too sensitive?"

"Possibly! You shall judge. I thank Heaven that for a time, at least, I have left New England behind me. There may be society there more elevated—a moral atmosphere more genial than I have any knowledge of; my own experience stamps the first as narrow, selfish, and conceited; the second as inconceivably grovelling and sordid. I will tell you something of that experience, although I fear it has little to interest. I will tell you because you may find in it something to palliate views and feelings which may strike you, perhaps, as warped and cynical."

"No! I only think you are angry now, because no doubt you have been badly treated. You must know I am rather prejudiced; I have for years regarded New England as a sort of haven of justice for all kinds and conditions of men—a place where none could go without being valued, trusted, and rewarded for what they are—and that, without regard to the smiles or frowns of all the world beside."

"New England and its people have great merits no doubt. There are numbers, without question, who can justly and gracefully sound her praises from the depths of their own knowledge, from the sincerity of their own gratitude. I cannot; true, mine may be a rare, an exceptional case; but such as it is, you shall hear its history."

He rose as he spoke, and taking his rifle made one of those swift circuits of the sleeping camp which it was part of the duty of those on watch now and again to perform. In a few moments he returned.

"I have so rarely put confidence in any one," he said rather diffidently, as he resumed his seat by the girl's side, "that it comes awkwardly enough to relate my own poor adventures. You will make large allowance, I am sure, for the want of grace or fluency in the narrative."

Mary Anne bowed in assent, and as she did so, one or two of the burning logs of the camp-fire fell in, and the flames shot up with a ruddier glow; and if Hugh Gifford had been looking as closely as most men would have looked at the lovely face beside him, he might have seen, or fancied, a warmer interest than that mere assent implied. He went on with his story:—

"My father was an Englishman, who left his native land early in life. Why he did so, and why in doing so, he chose America for a home, I never knew. When he died, I was still too young to have

been told of such things; and afterwards, if any about me knew of them, none took the trouble to enlighten me. My father was unfortunate, very.—Perhaps I ought to say that his own weaknesses were the active causes of his misfortunes; but I do not like to say that, for none knew what he may have suffered in his youth, and miserable detractors said it too often, who were unworthy to tie his shoes. He was a gentleman, I know. A gentleman by birth, by breeding, by education. If this fact had happily been unknown to my early associates, my life might have been the pleasanter.

"My father married, too, in this country. The marriage was not a happy one. Over this I would also draw a veil so far as well I may. An Englishman's idea of the duty of a wife, and an American woman's of that of a husband might easily clash, as those experienced in both perfectly well know. Still they might have agreed and been happy, had they been left to themselves. She was a pure-minded and conscientious woman, and, albeit he gave her much cause for complaint, she would have gained an influence which might have softened and controlled his foibles and laid the basis for a happy future. She was very young at the time of their marriage, and her character had scarcely had time to mature. When it might have done so, with results all-important to the whole lives of both my parents, and that of their child, my mother's brothers interfered, and

sowed the seeds of incurable dissension between herself and her husband. They took advantage of my father's temporary absence—an absence, unfortunately connected with his besetting weakness—to poison her mind against him. They persuaded her to return a letter reversed, and otherwise unanswered, which he had sent her. The expedient succeeded, and my father and mother—in this world, at least—never met again.

"These men, the brothers, thought they were doing their sister a service. As to my father, they were utterly incapable of understanding or appreciating him. They were men in business, not exactly tradesmen, but a step or two above it, and with true New England feeling they conceived that their regular attention to daily routine, and their smug companionship with other common-place money-grubbers like themselves, endowed them with a worldly *status* far above that of my father, who was poor, irregular in his habits, and—a gentleman. While they thought they were doing their sister a service, they were not sorry for an opportunity to humiliate a man they had never quite understood, but had always somewhat feared. He possessed accomplishments which they at once envied and disliked. He had personal courage and artistic tastes, which they pretended to despise or to consider affected; but which, in reality, they knew to be the badges and signs of a superior nature to their own,

the marks of blood which no prosperity could have emphasized, any more than any misfortune or even vice could altogether obliterate."

"I know the kind of man you mean," said Mary Anne, softly.

"These men were vindictive, too, as well as short-sighted and cowardly. When my father married, although not rich, he was affluent as compared with them. They were young in the world, needy, almost friendless, almost homeless. He took them by the hand, aided them to the utmost of his power, encouraged, advanced, stood by them. They were of the true reptile breed, and they never forgave him. They got on and prospered, as the little world went in which they moved, and at the same time my father had been going downward. His faults were patent enough, but they were not the men to school him on them. They attempted to do so, however, and they never pardoned the rebuke which they had thus provoked.

"Therefore, when they had contrived to bring about a rupture between my father and mother; when they had managed to put asunder those whom God had joined together; they went about with busy lies and innuendoes and prevarications, to the end that public opinion might trample my father still deeper into the mire, and that my mother, well plied with their accounts of his misconduct during the term of their separation, should learn to regard as

final and insuperable the barrier they had erected between herself and her husband. It became so; the efforts of a few kindlier hearts, who remembered the brightness and promise of the early days of their marriage—for they were both very handsome and attractive people—never surmounted it.

"But New England is very observant and sharp-tongued whenever, from whatever cause, any suspension occurs of ordinary marital relations. If man and wife must perforce separate, they had best keep out of the territory of the Pilgrims. My mother was too proud to explain, to remonstrate, or to propitiate, and she was neither rich enough nor strong enough to brave the world's opinion. Her position grew more equivocal and more difficult as time wore on. Then her brothers, who had young families growing up, were thriving in their callings, and were full of social ambition, treated her with more and more distance and coldness. Finally, the slender thread snapped altogether, and they never met at all. Thus my poor mother was deserted by the kindred who had brought about her greatest misfortune in life. She lingered on for a few years and died. Some people called her mortal illness by one name, and some by another; but she died of a broken heart."

"And your father?"

"He, too, died; it was a year before her, and the circumstances were very painful. His death, no doubt, accelerated her own. Meanwhile, I had been

sent to various schools. I was ten years old at the time of the separation, and for some time after was left in my mother's unmolested charge. She did all she could for me, nay, more than with her slender means she was justified in doing; but, as I said before, she was conscientious, and would do more rather than less than her duty. After my eleventh birthday, there was some painful litigation, and it resulted in my going to my father; but neither he nor my mother lived until my twelfth."

"You were, then, left an orphan?"

"Yes; one of my mother's brothers, the one who had perhaps most heart of the three, sent me to a boarding-school, and afterwards to another and another. I was miserable in all; yet I know not that he could have done better for me. The boys always found out by some inexplicable but never-lacking instinct that there was something wrong in my family matters. And they were worthy sons of their New England sires, for they made me feel it more bitterly than if it had arisen through some crime of my own. They also discovered, by more obvious means, that I was very poor—a sin even worse than the other. The first reproach might readily have been condoned, had the conditions of the second been reversed, but the two together were inexpiable. They shunned me, pointed at me between their malignant whispers, wrote bitter taunts in fly-leaves of my school books which fell into their

hands. I don't know that they ever analysed their opinions, but if they did they resolved them down to the firm basis that a boy whose parents lived apart, and who at the same time had no money, ought not, as a matter of propriety, to be allowed to live; and, God knows, if they entertained such a conviction, I shared it with them."

"I had few companions, and hardly ever joined in the usual boyish sports. I would not obtrude myself, and I was rarely invited. Those of my schoolmates who were better off—by far the larger number—seemed to despise me, and, at all events, they avoided me as if I were a Pariah. The very few who were even humbler than myself, or younger, or more ignorant, usually discovered that I was the son of an Englishman, and cherished a prejudice on that account. I believe they thought my father had some mysterious connection with Greville's wickedness, or had had a hand in the preparation of the Stamp Act. Nearly all these boys were mean and acquisitive; they were shopkeepers and money-grubbers in embryo. They swapped knives, gambled for marbles, and were continually over-reaching each other in juvenile speculations, thus actively preparing for the business of life. They had all the greed, the narrowness, the sectarian pride, and exclusiveness of their progenitors, in little; you will not wonder that I liked them no better than they liked me.

"I was the son of an Englishman, and few trans-

planted trees will thrive. From my earliest youth I found, irrespective of human beings and their peculiarities, much to displease me and rouse my aversion in surrounding objects and in natural vicissitudes. I disliked the burning heat of the summers, and the piercing, dismal cold of the winters. I disliked the square, white-painted, wooden houses which covered the hill sides and villages, with the treeless wastes which surrounded, and the mathematically straight roads which led to them. I disliked the unmeaning, fragile meeting-houses, with their monotonous spires, their canting preachers, and the innumerable and indescribable sectarians, their congregations. I yearned for the soft, moist-tempered clime of the olden home, with its winding green lanes, its masses of comfortable foliage, its stout-built little cottages all covered with thatch and running vines, its dear crumbling old churches, all reverend and grey with time, and rich with stores of ivy which had taken so long to grow. Was there necessarily an inseparable bond between unlimited freedom and unlimited ugliness? Must forest trees always be destroyed in republics, and where universal suffrage is must the streets of cities be like chess-boards?"

"You speak of the accidental peculiarities of a new country, not of those of a republic. What you craved comes as the work of time, and not of kings. The republics of Greece and Rome left temples and high places glorious and venerable enough."

"Yes; but I was a boy then, and naturally associated political conditions with their repellant accompaniments; and still, now that I am a man, I find that mental peculiarities present many analogies to physical ones. I find now, as I found then, that the processes which sweep away nobility, national religion, class privileges, whatever their advantage, bring no substitutes as yet for the incentives they displace. It may be untrue that extension of suffrage makes the popular choice of little value, but I know that abrogation of the things I name has practically left no spur for ambition save the hope of wealth. Wherever I turned in my boyhood I saw nothing else. I saw that if I would hold any position in the world, wield any power, be successful in love—anything—I must first of all get money."

"Be successful in love?" repeated Mary Anne.

"Yes. I am coming to the end of my sad, and I fear dull, tale. As you have seen, my childhood was lonely and loveless; my youth was sadder still, for, as I grew older, I felt even more keenly the slurs that were cast upon my station and my origin. Books were almost my only companions. To this, when I had reached the age of sixteen, there came one particular exception. I had been placed in a country attorney's office to read law. A small sum left by my poor father sufficed to pay for my schooling, and to give me this little start in the world—scarcely more. I was, therefore, happily spared what

would have been inexpressibly odious—the being under pecuniary obligation to my uncle. My solicitude was probably misplaced; for I have since reflected that, had this small sum not existed, he would have thrust me forth long before to shift for myself. In this attorney's office I found a young man—one of the few generous natures I have ever encountered. He was the son of a well-to-do farmer, of Lenox, in Berkshire county. In our vacation he invited me to visit his father's house. I accepted, and there for the first time met his sister. She was very beautiful, and her name was Virginia."

A half-suppressed sigh escaped Mary Anne.

"Was she fair or dark?"

"Fair—very fair. With hair of gold and skin of pearl. She had one charm rare in a New England girl—a low, musical voice—and another not so rare—a sweetly-winning smile. I won't weary you with a conventional love story. We found much to like in each other; for her, none could help being attracted by her, and I suppose I was fascinated into taking great pains to conceal my faults. My visit was repeated again and again, and at last, with her acquiescence, I asked Mr. Chester to sanction our engagement. He listened with kindness, and I thought regarded my suit with favour. When I had concluded, however, he seemed embarrassed, and after a pause said,—

"I like ye very much, Mr. Gifford, and so does

John, and so, I expect, does Virginia; but you see there's been a good deal o' talk—your folks, you know, was—that is, you know your father was——"

"My father was a gentleman, Mr. Chester."

"I don't know anything about that; but how much money did he leave ye?"

"I was forced to confess that, at the end of my probation in the lawyer's office, I should not have more than a couple of hundred dollars left. Mr. Chester's countenance fell. He went on:—

"I wouldn't a cared so much 'bout your folks, you know; though it's a pity—and your father, you know—not but that I've heerd he was a nice man—only folks will talk—but if he hain't left ye no money, what d'ye calculate to git married on?"

I explained that it was my hope, after being admitted to the bar, to obtain an income through the practice of my profession.

"Ah, that's dreadful uncertain, ain't it? When I put John in Squire Tarbox's office he told me right out that a young man weren't likely to git more the fust five year than he'd git by goin' huckleberryin', and John's arrangements was made accordingly."

This was a dark prospect, and I knew what the farmer said was true. I was not—or rather had not been—without the usual dreams of boyhood, wherein we see ourselves achieving wonders altogether out of the common way. But I knew that even if uncommon obstacles did not lie in my path—which, however,

they always did—the average chances at the New England country bar had not been too sombrely painted. I resolved to go to Boston. There a wider field presented itself, and preferment might come faster. Mr. Chester seemed pleased with my resolution, and encouraged it.

"If ye go to Boston ye may git better chances, certainly; and I'll tell ye what I'll do. You've got a year longer to read afore you're admitted? Well, if you come to me in three years' time, and show me three thousand dollars—that's jest the amount of a mo'gage lyin' on this ere farm—all your own money, mind—I dunno as I'll oppose things between you and Virginia. But if this is agreed, I won't have nothin' gin out about engagements in the mean time."

Upon this basis our bargain was struck. Within the year, I passed, and went to Boston. I struggled hard, read early and late, tasked my energies and my ingenuity to the last degree to fight upward. But it was all in vain. No one seemed to wish to employ me. I had no friends, no influence. My uncles, who might have assisted me, kept aloof. They even went further, and, as I have since heard, secretly disparaged my capacity and my character. Their vengeance on my father was not yet appeased. The three years passed, and I was poorer than ever. Just then the news came of the discovery of the gold in California, and I at once determined to make my

way thither. I went into Berkshire, explained my position and my new determination, and—with some difficulty—arranged with Mr. Chester for a probation of two years more."

"And does she—Virginia—love you?"

"She has often told me so."

"You will correspond?"

"I am to find letters from her on our arrival."

Such was the story of Hugh Gifford, and such was the manner in which it was communicated to Mary Anne. She accepted it as the record of a highly-sensitive nature grown morbid through the stress of a false position and thwarted sensibilities. His yearnings for the life and scenery of the old worn-out land across the sea were the reflexes of much reading—growths sown in discontent and stimulated by the want of sympathy with those around him. His strong desire for gold was to her something repugnant and unnatural, and doubtless it lowered him somewhat in her esteem. On the other hand, there was that in his isolation, his delicacy, and his apparent need of sympathy, which constantly attracted her. Whether or not she had gone so far as to allow her feelings to become seriously interested in the young man we need not pause to inquire; but it is certain that the announcement of his engagement gave Mary Anne a sudden shock—an unexpected pang. Hugh Gifford was one of the last men of whom you would think to hear it said that

he was engaged to be married, and yet you would have been puzzled, as Mary Anne was, to explain why. After awhile you might come to the conclusion—as she did—that there was so much self-restraint, so much reticence in his character, as to make it improbable that he would ever go so far with any woman as to say that he loved her. This sort of man is very generally misunderstood, and almost always misleads those who seek to fathom him. He is like a mill pond, which the higher and closer the dam the more sweeping and abundant is the flood it pours forth when the barrier is once overleaped.

Whatever the girl's sentiments might have become —whatever seeds might have found lodgment in her breast capable of quickening into blossoms—this name of Virginia had been a spell if not to freeze and destroy, at least to thrust them away far from the light into her heart's innermost recesses. If any observer could have suspected her feelings before, they should never have grounds for suspicion hereafter. Every avenue was guarded henceforth with trusty sentinels of maidenly reserve. Mary Anne and Gifford were good friends for the future, and nothing more.

In the capacity of friends then, they had had many a discussion and perhaps some useful interchange of thought. It has been seen that Mary Anne's opinions of New England had been assailed,

not to say outraged, by the tale which she had heard. Ever since she had learned to read, New England, and especially Massachusetts, had been cherished in her convictions as the happiest and justest of communities; the Utopia where, if ever social and political justice had existed on earth, they could be sought and found. In New England was labour respected, intellect cherished, virtue canonized, grey hairs reverenced. In New England was truth discovered, thought unshackled, merit sought out with diligence and crowned with honour. In New England was the place of sanctuary, the refuge of the oppressed, the cradle of liberty!

To her, Boston was more than Mecca to a true believer, and Faneuil Hall greater than the Holy Temple. And was this hallowed country, this vaunted intellectual and moral paradise, this exemplar among the nations, no more than the home of a vulgar and base-minded plutocracy? The lair of a crew of idolators setting up a worship more ignoble and more sordid than that of the veriest slaves who ever crawled to thrust their necks under the foot of a tyrant? They were in fine condition truly, these republicans, to despise the subjects of kings! There might be something at least of dignity in such a potentate — ancient lineage, the association of a magical name with heroic deeds of the past, long-time consent, and reverence of ancestors; but what could there be about this wretched *parvenu*, this

monarch of yellow earth, that the children of the Puritans should fall down and worship him!

Alas, alas! That the purest and most aspiring should be little abler than the meanest to shake off burdens—to shiver the yoke of oppressors—without taking on of themselves yokes and burdens of different but no nobler species, in the room of those they have bled and died to break and to destroy!

After all, what right had Hugh Gifford to speak thus of his home,—of the land which gave him birth? His views were unjust—distorted—seen with a jaundiced eye; for by his own confession he was disappointed, nay, disgusted with his lot. Her own estimate of New England might be the truer one yet; and still had he not lived there all the days of his life, and she, not one? Was he not better fitted to form a judgment, to express a censure? Perhaps; —but then again she remembered how lovingly he had spoken of Old England—of her green fields, and hoary ruins, her placid streams, and happy rural homes,—of the order and comfort of her society, where all were by the law equally protected whether living in haughty castles or in those lowly comfortable cottages. What did he know of the Old England more than she knew of the New? He had never been in the one any more than she had been in the other. And she—she could tell a bitterer tale of wrong and oppression than had ever fallen to his lot; had greater cause to magnify the beauty of a

distant picture by comparison with the poverty or discomfort of that which is near. Evidently they had the same disposition, how different soever their natures otherwise might be—the disposition which comforts and gilds so much of life in this iron world of ours, to idealize the unknown.

CHAPTER IV.

THERE was that about Mary Anne to more than justify even the extravagant admiration of Luke Armstrong. She was a woman, indeed, who would have attracted more attention in a London ball-room than on a western prairie; since where nature is most unchecked and luxuriant, we look for physical types to correspond as matters of course. You might have thought, in regarding her, of Diana and Juno; but you would have been sure to feel, à moment after, that there was too much womanliness about the girl to vindicate her comparison with either. There was an ease and freedom about her carriage which, for some inexplicable reason, is uncommon with American women: for, although the European organization, being transplanted, does unquestionably acquire, sooner or later, certain aboriginal characteristics, the particular ones of grace and dignity in movement and bearing, so marked in the American savage, are not reproduced in his civilized successor.

Perhaps Mary Anne was the gainer in grace through being untrammelled with unsightly crino-

line; yet, as this was an immunity she enjoyed in common with the Armstrongs, mother and daughter, as also with the unsophisticated Bridget, neither of whom walked or stood like her, it was clearly nature and not art which was to be credited for the advantage. Her limbs, not being confined in an iron cage then, moved with freedom, and answered the purpose for which they were made, without any suggestion of indelicacy, such as the admirers and promoters of iron cages are fond of detecting in their absence. The girl was unconventional in another respect; for her massive black locks were neither frizzled nor padded, nor strained backwards with that Chinese and eye-torturing effect some time popular with the experts of fashion. Her forehead was high but the hair grew low, so low as to be almost a defect, and was parted straight across the brows. The eyebrows and lashes were, like the hair, of a jetty black; the latter would have seemed when the eyes were closed superfluously lengthy and sweeping; but when they opened, the eyes were found large enough to justify such abundant curtains. The nose was straight, the lips perfect, and the teeth dazzlingly white. If the face had a fault it was that the chin was a trifle too large; it expressed, perhaps, too much will to be in strict harmony with the rest of the features.

As we have seen, she wore a gown of plain worsted stuff, which fitted closely to a figure whose comeliness left nothing to desire. The hands and

feet without being remarkably small, were beautifully shaped; and although the latter might have appeared to better advantage than in their deer-skin mocassins with soles of elk, which were found best for general purposes on the prairie, and the former had become somewhat browned by the sun, their natural symmetry could not be altogether concealed.

The inner nature of this young woman was well expressed in her physical development. So far as enthusiasm, ardency, strength of the inclinations, warmth of the attachments may go, she was a true child of the South. With less heart she might have been cruel, and might still be revengeful; with less intellect she might have been passionate and voluptuous. But happily the elements were tolerably well balanced, and whatever might lie below the surface, there was enough above it to make Mary Anne dangerously attractive.

It was not surprising, then, that Luke Armstrong should be attracted; but it certainly seemed remarkable that Hugh Gifford was not. So much so in truth to Luke himself, that he lost all sense of jealousy, knowing as he did that the pair were much together, when he thought of it.

Two beings could scarcely have been more opposite than the southern girl and the young New Englander. He was slight, not tall, but deep chested and strongly built, with short light hair, tending to

curl, Saxon-looking eyes and complexion, and a rather firmly set mouth and chin. He presented few, if any, of the national traits, which require, as a rule, more than one generation to bring forth, and his speech had none of the twang common in this section. This deficiency, by no means regarded as meet for congratulation, was imputed by Dick Railes, Jabe Fitch, and their fellows, to what they termed "too much scholarin'."

If there had been nothing approaching to flirtation, however, between these young people, there grew up a great deal of friendly and sympathetic intercourse; and although the news of Hugh's engagement might have been unwelcome to her, there was nothing in Mary Anne's subsequent manner which could be perceptibly traced to such a feeling. She was not quite as ready afterwards, perhaps, to speak of her own childhood, albeit she had promised to do so in the way of reciprocity when Hugh had described his own; but she would not break her word, and, after being once or twice reminded, she proceeded to fulfil it.

"My story is very brief," she said, "and has little, I fear, to interest, because, until within the twelvemonth passed, it has contained so little of pain. The first sights I can remember are those of warm colours, loving faces, and rich scenery, of bounteousness and affluence both within and without. The first sounds are those of voices, melodious with affection, of

brilliant music tastefully played, of the songs of birds, and the pleasant murmurs of brooks which ran through our plantation to swell the Mississippi. The first odours are those of roses, of orange-blossoms, and magnolias. Those were dear days, and I was very, very happy."

"How can you be drawn toward our bleak, sterile New England if your happiness sprang from associations such as these?"

"These are mere gratifications of the senses, are they not? They may be pleasant in reminding us of those we loved, who were with us when surrounded by them. New England I have honoured for something which, with all its blessings and delights, was not to be found in my early home. As a child I did not miss it; and these sights, and sounds, and odours, are always with me when I think of those who were inexpressibly dear. My father almost idolized me. There was nothing that money could buy, nothing that anxious affection could desire, which was wanting to minister to my health, my enjoyments, my education."

"Ah, you had always wealth, then?" said Hugh, thoughtfully.

"Always. I ought to be very unhappy now, but one of the comforts—the consolations—seems to me to be without it."

The young man shook his head incredulously.

"It is quite natural you should not think so;

perhaps you may hereafter. We had a plantation near the great river, and here we passed the summers;—summers full of light and joy; with pleasant friends and choicest books; with charming drives and lovely views: there could not well be a happier life than mine was then, and I remember my fondest wish was that it should remain so always. I was not sent to school like the daughters of neighbouring planters, so I did not see many of them; and, indeed, most of our friends came from a distance; but I had private teachers, for my father wished me to be accomplished, and would spare neither money nor pains to that end. In the winters we went to New Orleans, my father and a sister of his, to whom we were both much attached, and I. We always took the same servants, and our house was always ready for us in town. There we had the opera,—I was passionately fond of the opera,—and races, and parties, and sometimes balls, though my father was particular where I went, and on such occasions insisted on his sister as well as himself being one of the party. This, of course, was when I grew up,—I mean five years ago,—I am one-and-twenty now."

"These people we are with must be strangely offensive—I mean very distasteful to you."

"No; they are very good and kind. It is not their fault that they have never been in society or spent money on accomplishments, or learned to speak quite correctly. They are a little *brusque*

sometimes, but I know they mean no harm, and so it does not give me pain. I have been used to ignorant people with good hearts all my life, and never learned to despise them. Besides, they have given me a sanctuary—a refuge——"

"A refuge?"

"Yes; I shall come to that soon. As I have said, I was very happy. My teachers were carefully selected, and I had none of the misfortunes in the shape of malignant or ill-taught nurses or others having control of my infancy, which, as I have read, often warp the nature of children, and inflict irreparable injury. I had a happy childhood, and the best of fathers."

"And your mother?"

A flush came up into the girl's face, but the camp fire was not bright enough at the moment for Hugh Gifford to see it.

"I never remember seeing her; she died when I was very, very young, and those about me never spoke of her."

"She died abroad, perhaps?"

"No; not abroad; but it was long after her death before I was old enough to understand such things, and by that time those about me had, I suppose, forgotten it."

"And your father—did he never speak of her?"

"Sometimes, when we were alone together; but I had rather not speak more of her just now, please."

"Pray forgive me; had I thought the subject was painful——"

"No, no; it is not,—at least it should not be. Besides, I have no right to reserve my confidence after you have given me yours."

"Nay, I exact no such literal recompence. I questioned because I surmised that your own, like my dear mother, might have been unhappy."

"Alas, I fear she was, very, very unhappy."

"But let us speak no more of that; go on about yourself."

"You will understand that life was so bright and beautiful all around me, that my thoughts never dwelt upon things that were sad. You have seen the song-birds carolling and frolicing among the flowers when everything about them is bathed in warm, genial sunshine; when their needs and their pleasures are lavishly supplied without labour or care; when their thoughts are farthest from the damp, dusky night, and they make no provision for the pinching winter? The night must come in its due course, the winter must be felt in its season, but they, the gay and thoughtless ones, have no heed for the one or the other. So was it with me through all my early life. My father's care prepared me for everything except to meet adversity."

"He hoped to shield you always from it."

"Doubtless; and for me, I never dreamed that such hopes are never realized. Perhaps, too, his

views had more than usually exists to justify them. We were rich; and it was probable that we should always so remain."

"There was much to warrant hope in that."

"Ah, you think so much of money; and yet, after all, what did it do for me?"

"Everything, I should say, from your story so far, or next to everything. Does not all the happiness which surrounded you, the luxury which lapped your childhood, the pleasures which gilded your youth, the travel which enlarged, the tuition which instructed your understanding, did not these all depend upon the possession of wealth?"

"They did; and yet perchance I had been happier if the wealth had never been,—if I had been born as poor as I now am, and am likely to be for the future."

Hugh looked at her with his incredulous smile. "How easy it is to talk of the nothingness of riches, of the luxury of honest poverty! How much we hear of it in our pulpits; how much we read of it in our newspapers! Turn where we will, we are confronted with endless babble of the dignity of labour, of honest toil, of hard-handed industry! And what is the sum and substance of all? A bubble,—a most illusory, transparent, and empty bubble! Why, the preachers and the scribblers who teach this doctrine are the most grasping and avaricious of all! What do they care for, think of, pray for, whether

rising, sitting, walking, or sleeping? Gold!—gold,—nothing but gold!"

"Gold," murmured Ike, as he lay half asleep, his red head pillowed as usual on Lion's curly back; "Gold," he repeated, "they're all arter it! Hoosier from the backwoods, pedlar from the town, chaps from Old England, chaps from New England, farmer to buy new steers, farmer's wife to buy new chinay. All arter the gold! nothing but gold!"

"And yet," said Mary Anne, gently, "and yet it brought me the first suffering of my life, it brought me its greatest crisis of danger and pain; and when I pray, it is always that wealth, or the love of it, may not make my life for the future altogether wretched."

"Riddles," said Hugh, "or fantasies. The gold is real, tangible, solid."

"Solid gold," echoed the half-wit; "Ike knows where 'tis; acres of it, oceans of it, mountains of it! But he won't tell; oh, no! 'Twould kind o' hurt ye, and set ye back to git too rich all in a minute! So we'll keep it for ourselves,—Lion and me—Lion and me." He smoothed and patted the dog's head as if sealing the compact, and Lion looked at his master with a wise, trustful acquiescence in his watchful eyes, as Ike turned heavily over and fell asleep again.

"Not riddles, not fantasies," continued Mary Anne, "but hard, pitiless realities. It was because

we were rich and because the fame of it went abroad that the first bitter hours I had ever known came upon me. When I was eighteen, there came on a visit to our country home a gentleman we had met the winter before in New Orleans. He was young, rich, gifted, it was said, and belonged to one of the proudest families in Louisiana. My father liked him much, and rather courted his society; urged him, indeed, to pay us this visit with an object that I only afterwards divined. That object you can readily guess."

"He wished him to become your suitor?"

"He did; and in truth there was much about him to attract any woman, especially one so young and inexperienced as I was. My father was wise, too; he imposed upon me no command, scarce even a wish; but I could not help seeing that it was agreeable to him that Mr. Du Solle and I should be much together—riding, walking, playing,—the various pursuits and amusements of a country life."

"Mr. Du Solle was handsome."

"He was thought so; to me he always seemed too dark: he had a Spanish face with glittering teeth; handsome when he smiled, but forbidding and harsh if he frowned. He was agreeable enough, however, and evidently took pains to make himself liked. Still, I felt sure from the moment I saw his and my father's aim, I felt sure that I could never love him, and I think he knew it too. But matters went on,

as they will in such cases, and it came to be generally bruïted about the neighbourhood that we were engaged. I often reproach myself with this now,—I was cowardly; had I faced my father's anger and his indignation, had I told him betimes that I could never love that man, the terrible consequences might have been spared."

"Terrible?"

"Most terrible, as you will hear. The time came at last when Mr. Du Solle declared himself. He asked me to become his wife. I was forced to be candid then, and I told him the truth. He pleaded, remonstrated, wept. I would change, perhaps. I felt certain that I never should, but was touched by the evident sincerity of his feelings. He acknowledged that the reputation of my father's great wealth had at first attracted him, but protested that he now loved me for myself alone. Alas! for man's duplicity and falsehood,—I believed him. I could not promise to love him, but I yielded to his passionate entreaty, and agreed to delay a week before giving him a final dismissal.

"In that week he made a horrible discovery. By what means I knew not then—know not even now. I did not even know the nature of the discovery itself, so religiously had the truth been kept from me, until another event more awful still had occurred as its consequence. One day—the third after our interview—I had been riding, attended only by a

negro servant, for it had been agreed Mr. Du Solle was not to be my escort during the week of probation. I alighted at the portico fronting the main hall of the house, when, with a face like midnight, he suddenly confronted me:—

"'So!' he hissed, rather than said, 'So you are a party; you, with your amiable father, to this exquisite conspiracy!'

"'Sir,' I stammered, outraged and astonished, 'What conspiracy, what mean you—how dare you?'

"'Oh spare your pretended amazement,' he cried, furious with anger, 'It is likely that eighteen years should pass and you, forsooth, be still in ignorance.'

"He went on for some moments pouring forth heated abuse of which I cannot now remember a word, but which redoubled my agitation and surprise.

"'Sir,' I gasped at last, 'this is incredible, infamous. Let me pass—let me go to my father!'

"'Your father!' shouted Du Solle, 'Your father! Infamous, dishonoured as he is. Let him come to me! let him answer for his attempt to disgrace me! The villain! To seek to entrap me, unawares; to link my name, my blood, with the daughter of his——'

"I heard no more, and no more was said, for my father was by my side. He struck Du Solle with dreadful rapidity several heavy blows with his fists,

and then kicked him down the steps under my horse's feet. What followed I know not, for I fainted.

"Let me make as brief as may be the horrible sequel. They fought the next day—a protracted and barbarous duel—and my father was brought home a corpse.

"Even while I was yet in my agony over this cold clay, my nurse—a mulatto woman, who dearly loved me from my birth—poured into my terror-stricken ears the secret whose disclosure had led to this catastrophe. She showed me ample proofs of what she would never, never, have revealed; as with bitter tears and lamentations she explained, but for a circumstance which made such a step inevitable. *My father had left no will.* His relatives were coming in haste to claim the estate; and hear it, O GOD of Heaven! so far from inheriting my father's wealth I must fly—fly—if I would not, by remaining, add to its sum in my own unhappy person.

"I did fly—with speed, with secresy, and at night. I had help at first, for every hand on the plantation would have aided me; but after leaving it there were two days and a half of travel before reaching St. Louis, and I was in constant dread of the telegraph. However, I got to St. Louis in safety.

"Thus you see that, in my case at least, wealth was not altogether a blessing, since it had wrought

me the greatest possible curse—the most irreparable affliction. You see, too, that however they may appear so, the motives are not all alike that impel us to this Western pilgrimage; for you go for the sake of Gold, I for Liberty!"

CHAPTER V.

OUR travellers had crossed the great chain of the Rocky Mountains upon a line between what is now known as Pike's Peak and the pass called by the early Spanish explorers Sangré de Christo. The little stream whereon they had encamped was in fact one of the mountain sources of the Rio Grande del Norte, a river which, although it has its rise westwards of the great chain, finds its way through the pass bearing the same name with itself, and ultimately flows into the Gulf of Mexico, forming the boundary between the latter country and Texas. The next water they would cross in their progress westwards would doubtless be an affluent of the Colorado, which empties into the Gulf of California, and the party could then fairly consider itself on the Pacific slope.

The general aim had been to make a course as near due west as possible, and their present latitude differed but little from that of St. Louis, their point of departure. In this policy Seth Armstrong had been materially aided by the observations of Dr. Landale, who, notwithstanding the scarce

concealed contempt of Dick Railes, was constant in determining their daily position by means of his instruments. The fact that Indians and Trappers could find their way without such assistance seemed to the backwoodsman quite conclusive evidence against its utility, but as he could make converts of neither the Doctor nor Seth Armstrong, his conservative objections to science were unheeded. His daily jest, that "the Doctor was goin' to shoot the sun agin," had little effect, therefore, save upon the sympathizing intelligence of Nahum Pelter, who, whenever he heard, received it as a criticism of the first water and pungency. Whereupon Luke, whose nature it was to try, as he said, to "make things run easy," would observe deprecatingly that "Dick was a stubborn cuss about the th'odolite."

"Humph," grunted the Doctor. "All ignorance is stubborn I take it. If Master Railes were made to go through the first four books of Euclid—if he once got an idea that the circle means anything beyond the shape of the sun or the end of his powder-horn, he'd be pliable enough."

"He don't like book learnin', he'd never take to it."

"Of course not; so for him a theodolite will be a gimcrack, and a sextant will be shooting the sun till the end of the chapter."

"Well, I don't s'pose common folks know much more'n the old country than they know here."

"Except to hold their tongues—less about most things else. And their betters are not always so very wise either. There are plenty in England as stupid as your people here, who think when there's a famine over sea which comes of too many mouths, or poor crops, or laziness, or all three, that it's all the fault of that rotten old monarchy and the wicked aristocracy. There are plenty there who'll swear by-and-by, when you get into trouble from slavery and too many voting immigrants, that it's all the fault of your republican institutions—institutions, which, in nine essentials out of ten, are precisely the same as their own. We're all shooting the sun to people who don't know what we're doing."

"Yes," argued poor Luke, somewhat bewildered, "but we try to remedy that by spreading education so's to teach folks *to* know what you're doing."

"Ay, there's good in what you do—some good. But there's a deal of harm, too. It doesn't do a republican boy any good in the long run to cram him with lies about monarchies, or *vice versâ;* only the world isn't wise enough yet to find it out."

"I expect ourn's about the best system there is goin'," said Luke, taking refuge in the most current generality he could think of.

"No doubt it is for you—and it's lucky you think so."

Such a concession was quite satisfactory to Luke, who would go on his way rejoicing. The Doctor,

however, was more wary in being entrapped into discussion with such stern patriots as Dick Railes or Nahum Pelter, to whom his blunt tenets were not short of flat blasphemy, to be argued to the death in all the stump eloquence they had ever heard of or could master. Still the little circle had become attached and harmonious with the cement of their common cares and hopes; and perhaps there were none but would separate from each of the others with regret.

The morning after the halt broke bright and clear, although the sun was tardy in showing himself above the steeps behind them. Long before he did so the camp was a scene of bustling activity; for, although the halt was nominally for rest and refreshment, there was much to do in the way of comfort and cleanliness which for the past few weeks had been perforce neglected. Thus, Castle Armstrong was to be cleared out, the remaining packages of provisions to be overhauled and aired, clothes to be washed, rifles and other arms to be cleaned, and a score of minor needs and duties to be attended to during the respite from the march. Half the small stores originally stowed in the provision waggon had now been consumed, and yet when those which were left came to be spread about the ground during the process of scrubbing, it seemed as if it were impossible to get them in again. But Mrs. Armstrong was the possessor of marvellous ingenuity, and, had her spouse

permitted her to bring all she wished with the expedition—double the quantity really brought—no doubt she would have managed to pack it in the waggons."

"There was that 'ere Ike," she complained mournfully to Kitty, as she rigorously supervised the hidden operations of Bridget, in the waggon, whence issued profusion of steam and odour of soapsuds. "There was that 'ere Ike, and that big heathen, Lion,—father would bring them, and yet he'd leave behind a'most all my chinay. Not but that the poor critter's well enough, and done chores round the farm ever since he was a little tow-headed boy, and allus earned his salt, if he is silly, poor thing; and p'raps he wouldn't a taken to other folks after all these years, or they might a been harsh with him; but that 'ere pesky Lion—why, he'll eat more meat in a day than I kin in a week!"

"But, mother dear, you know Lion lives entirely on the scraps and bones, and things nobody else can touch; and he's a great protection to the camp, and he pulled me out of the water once, when my hoop went flyin' over the bank, and I went flyin' after it; and you know, mother, poor Ike never *could* git along without Lion."

"I know, I know," admitted Mrs. Armstrong, melting quite visibly, "but I might a had my chinay!"

"And you know, mother, the chinay couldn't have walked, or ridden a horse, or taken care of itself like Ike or Lion!"

"No, nor Ike and Lion wouldn't a sold in Californy for more'n ten times what they cost down to Zenia."

"And did brave Lion really save your life?" asked Mary Anne, with interest.

"I don't know that I can quite say that," answered Kitty, ingenuously, "for it might be I shouldn't have bin drowned without him. All I knew was, that I went plump into the river where it was very deep, and I went down—down ever so far, until I was quite sure I should never come up again. Then all at once I seemed to touch bottom,—it was all soft and oozy,—and I thought for a little I'd like to stay there, and stay I might for all I could help myself. Then I thought I ought to try and cry out, and I did try, but there seemed to be no noise, only a bubbling; and I felt I must die, for all my breath was gone. Just then a great black thing came bump, bump, against me, for I could see a little in the water,—the difference between dark and light, anyhow,—and I felt myself bein' dragged up, up, just as fast as before I went down, and we came up to the top of the water with a great jump, and I saw the green trees and the blue sky, and Ike, with his red hair all on end, standin' close by in a punt, and Lion with his great head next to mine, and then I fainted."

"Then he really did save you?"

"He ought to have the credit of it, anyhow; only as Ike was close to us in a hay-field, and came right off when he heard the splash, and would have saved

me, I take it, anyhow, I like to think they both had a hand in it."

"Poor Ichabod is clear-witted enough sometimes."

"Bless you, yes; about most everything, 'cept believin' he's so dreadful rich, you know. He always thought that long before we set out to go to California."

"And you could trust him—that is, with the house; for example, should you wish to go abroad?"

"Oh yes; and be safer than with some, for he'd neither pilfer nor yet drink whiskey. Jest look at him now. He's got Lion for a romp in the river; but he knows we're usin' it, so you see he goes down stream. I b'lieve Lion knows enough for that, as well as Ike, and there's many a Christian would know less."

During this little colloquy the two young women had, unconsciously, been serving as a target for the admiring glances of Luke Armstrong and Dick Railes; the former being absorbed in the contemplation of Mary Anne, and the latter no less interested in the animated Kitty. Dick was cleaning his rifle, or pretending to do so, and Luke performing the like office for a fowling-piece. Their attention, however, was suddenly distracted as Kitty concluded her eulogy, by a quick exclamation from her companion, promptly repeated by the speaker.

"Why!" cried Kitty, "what's the matter with the dog?"

Lion had been actively engaged in bringing out sticks and other missiles which Ike would cast for him into the water; but he had hastily loosed his hold of a huge branch he had been striving to drag from the bottom, and sprung up the bank on the opposite side of the stream. The dog was large—too large and too long-limbed to be a Newfoundland, although he was popularly reputed to be of that breed; and, as his huge frame stood out against the sky, he looked of even gigantic proportions.

"Lion!" called Ike, from his side of the stream. "What's got into the critter? Here, Lion, Lion!"

The dog did not turn, but, keeping his nose toward the mountains, gave a long, low whine.

"He's pintin' at something!" exclaimed Luke.

"It's a bar!" said Dick Railes, quietly loading his rifle.

"Ye don't s'pose their can be Injuns round, arter all?" asked Seth, in an undertone, as he came up anxiously.

"I don't b'lieve it; unless they might be a few scatterin' Utahs, and they wouldn't attack so many as we be."

"Dear me, father!" cried Mrs. Armstrong, looking with dismay on her scattered treasures, "if the savages come now, what will become of all the tea and sugar?"

"Don't be afeard, ma'am," said Dick; "the redskins don't kear a pine shavin' for them doin's;

whiskey, and 'baccy, and scalps, is what they travel fur!"

"Father!" questioned Kitty, fearfully, "do you see how Lion keeps on? What do *you* think's the trouble with him?"

"Why, nothin', Kitty, nothin'," replied Seth, cheerily; "leastways, nothin' to hurt. An antelope, p'raps, in the cover yonder—or a *coyote* * in the brush on the hill side—or a little brown bar, maybe; but sartin nothin' to hurt."

Kitty looked pale, and mother, little reassured, made for the Castle, to hurry her handmaid, Bridget, who was peering open-mouthed from the waggon, and telling Mary Anne, who, with a quick presentiment, had made her way inside to help in a swift repacking. "Shure the baste was goin' on as if he had the divil (savin' your presence) foreninst him."

"Ye'd better git your shootin' irons ready, boys," said Nahum Pelter, coming up and joining the group who were discussing; "it mought be a grizzly, ye know, and I'll allow them bars is dreadful cantankerous if they're hungry and git riled."

"If it prove to be Indians——" began the doctor.

"Injuns!" laughed the frontiersman derisively. "Ye won't ketch no Injuns comin' down on ye in a bee line with the wind, so that a dog with a dull nose like that kin tell ye on't a week beforehand. No;

* The wild dog, or wolf, of the Prairies.

if it ain't game, nor yit no wild critter, it 'll be more white folks travellin' like ourselves."

"Anyhow," said Luke Armstrong, "man or beast, we'd best be ready for 'em. Forewarned is forearmed, they say, and p'raps we owe Lion another good turn."

"Ay, ay," echoed the rest; "load up's the best word now, and find out what's in the wind arterwards."

Most of the party had taken advantage of the halt to clean or otherwise overhaul their fire-arms, so that they were now in good condition for service. For the next few moments little was heard but the snap of locks and rattle of ramrods thrusting home the bullets.

"Better git the women folks all into the waggon, Luke," said Seth, breaking the silence. "Two or three on ye git the cattle into the *corral*. Fust thing we know there 'll be a stampede, maybe. Stop the dog's whinin', can't ye, Ike?" he continued, calling, though in a suppressed voice, to the latter.

Ike turned, and without speaking, signed that the dog had made some discovery on the further side of the creek.

"Yes, yes, we know; but fetch him in—he can't tell us no more, and as like's not 'll pint us out to some one who don't yit know where we are."

The dog still stood on the rise of the bank, looming against the sky, and had repeated at intervals

his warning whine. All at once he changed this note, however, and gave vent to a hoarse, threatening growl.

"Fetch him in, Ike—fetch him in, quick, can't ye?" cried Luke, impatiently.

"Ye'd better," said Nahum Pelter, ominously, "or maybe the stranger 'll git acquainted with him in a way ye won't like."

"What on airth is it, father?" queried Mrs. Armstrong, nervously, from her Castle. "Tell us the wust whatever it is, and we'll stand by to help."

"We hain't seen ne'er a hide nor a hair," answered her husband; "but you can stand by, of course, if it's any comfort to ye. The two pieces air locked in the box that fits under my berth, and the bullets and powder, and the key is hangin' on a nail to the left hand side o' the winder, only load kearful, and don't use too much powder."

It had been agreed that, in the event of attack, the females should form a sort of reserve, loading weapons for the others, or using those in the waggon according to the nature of the emergency. In pursuance of this plan they had undergone not a little preliminary practice, and were considered by the men at all events fit to be trusted with arms, however they might use them to advantage in a moment of peril. "That gal, Mary Anne," said the experienced Pelter, when revolving this scheme with the

others, "that gal, Mary Anne, 'll stand fire; but whether the old woman and her darter will, ye can't tell till ye see 'em tried."

While the various preparations were progressing, Ichabod had been striving to induce the excited Lion to descend from his coigne of vantage, and return to his side; but the dog only replied to these requests by a deprecating shake of his tail, as if to say that Ike in his position was incapable of forming a just estimate of the exigencies of the case, and kept his ground. Now there is no doubt that Ike had greater confidence in Lion's sagacity than he had in that of any other individual of the party; he would unhesitatingly have deferred to his judgment in any affair wherein conflicting evidence brought about a diversity of opinions; but the gestures and exhortations of the party grew many and wrathful, and Ike, fearful of the consequences to his favourite, proceeded to wade across the stream to bring him in. The current was swift and deep, but there was a strong curve fifty yards below, where its bed widened and a bar formed which nearly met the side opposite that whence it sprung. Here the waggons had crossed, and here by wading through about three feet of water and taking a jump over a short space which intervened between the shoals, Ike managed to ford the stream. He soon reached the spot where Lion still kept up his menacing growl, and seizing him by the collar dragged the unwilling animal down

the bank. Any other than Ike might have found this operation attended with some peril; but the dog, although sorely discontented, submitted to be led across the stream, and finally made fast with the end of a lariat to one of the wheels of the Castle.

"Poor old Lion," repeated Ike, while going through this ungracious task, "Poor old Lion! Tells 'em all about who's comin', so they can git ready for bars or Injuns, and jest gits roped up for his pains! Knows more o' what's goin' on than any on 'em—long Pelter, or Dick Railes, or Jabe Fitch, or any out o' the 'hull lot—and they jest strut round all cock-a-hoop with their rifles and bowies, while poor old Lion's corded up like a break-jail! Never mind, Lion, Ike 'll bring ye a good elk-bone, and ye can enjoy yourself if ye *are* corralled." And suiting the action to the word, he sought out a great bone from some secret preserve, and straightway presented the peace-offering to the captive; but Lion gave a single grateful wag of his tail, and then, without touching the bone, concentrated his attention on the slope he had just quitted.

"If it turns out to be a grizzly," observed Nahum Pelter, sententiously, "and he pokes his snout over the rise, three on us had better fire, and the others hold their loads."

"Right," said Seth; "he might take the creek in a hurry, 'specially if not much hurt. Nahum, s'pose you, and Mr. Gifford, and Jabe fire; you're all steady

shots, and can reload as quick as any, and the rest on us kin stand by for squalls."

This plan being settled, two of the men were detailed to cross the stream, move down some distance, and "feel" in a manner the enemy's flank on the right, the water being so deep above that nothing could pass it without swimming. These scouts having received their instructions, were just on the point of starting, when a savage cry from Lion again fixed all eyes on the bank opposite. The tall figure of a man—by his dress and hue a genuine denizen of the forest—had suddenly appeared upon its summit. Quick as light the three rifles flew up to the shoulder, and were levelled.

"Hold!" cried Seth Armstrong. "Don't shoot! We might have a 'hull tribe about our ears afore the last o' the echoes!"

"Fact," assented Mr. Pelter, reluctantly dropping his piece. "Better find how many there be in the flock, afore shooting the single bird."

"Ay, ay; don't fire. Shame to fire on a single man—may be a friend; have a palaver fust," broke confusedly from the various members of the group, as the hostile weapons were lowered, and Ike persuaded Lion into a temporary silence.

The Indian—for such he was—had remained motionless and impassive on the hillock; nor, while he saw the threatening muzzles of the rifles, did he change his attitude or his expression. He was of

imposing stature, and, from the elevation of the ground where he stood, seemed to tower to a greater than human height. Indeed, what with his swarthy complexion, his air of command, and the suddenness of his appearance, there required no great effort of the imagination to conceive him the very genius of war, at whose beck might spring forth thousands of myrmidons to slay and to destroy.

When he saw, however, the rifles of the white men dropped from their shoulders, the Indian, with a gesture full of grace, took a crimson blanket from a sort of knapsack worn at his back, and holding it up with both hands at the two corners, shook it forth to the breeze, at the same time sweeping it downwards from above his head, as if to spread it on the ground.*

"The critter's friendly enough," exclaimed Dick Railes; "he wants to have a pow-wow."

"He ain't no Pawnee—nor yit no Ottoe—nor yit no Utah—he ain't like ere an Injun we've seen so fur," remarked Nahum Pelter.

"Whatever he is, he means us no harm," said Hugh Gifford. "He clearly proposes a parley."

"There may be a lot more hard by," observed Seth, dubiously.

"Surely, if he has companions, and they intended mischief, an ambuscade, or a night attack, would be

* A signal originating in the habit of spreading a robe or skin as a rest for guests to whom they wished to show distinguished courtesy: long practised as a sign of amity among most of the tribes westward of the Mississippi.

more promising than a demonstration like this," said Hugh. "Besides, as our friend here says, why come down on us with the wind?"

Thus reassured, Seth Armstrong laid down his rifle and, advancing to the brink of the rivulet, with amicable signs beckoned the stranger to enter the camp. The latter shook his head, courteously, and indicated that Seth's companions should likewise dispense with their arms. A consultation followed, which resulted in the men removing their rifles to a point at some little distance in their rear; Seth, however, taking the precaution to see that the two guns were properly loaded and ready in the Castle. Upon these concessions, the red man signified his willingness to confer with the party, and, having descended the bank and forded the stream, he advanced with dignity among them.

CHAPTER VI.

THE stranger looked of an uncertain age, for, while his face showed many marks of thought and exposure, his step was elastic as that of a youth. The features were prominent and aquiline, with the copper hue and high cheek-bones common to his race. There was, however, so much intelligence in the face—so much shrewdness and perception mingled with a certain courtly reserve—that the first impression of the observer would certainly have been to count it as that of a civilized man. The second, indeed, would have made him doubt; for he would now perceive that inscrutable tawn in the swift-flashing eye which always suggests the barbaric. Unlike those of most of the savages of the plains, his countenance seemed free from grease or paint; his head, however, was shaven, except the invariable scalp-lock, and from the ornamental circlet which surrounded it there sprung, behind, a towering eagle's plume.

He wore a hunting shirt of buckskin not unlike those of the white men, and leggings of the highly dressed skin of the antelope. The sides of the latter,

like the belt and head-dress, were decorated with porcupine quills and beads. From the belt were suspended bags made of more delicately prepared skins, containing ammunition, and a formidable looking hunting knife. The feet were protected by mocassins of deer-skin with thick elk soles, and the crimson blanket, before referred to, hung from the shoulders.

"My brothers do well," said the Indian, as he advanced into the expectant circle, "my brothers do well to be ready with their rifles, for there are many Ricaras and Ottoes on the War Path, and the horse thieves are always watching their trail." He spoke in English with a guttural but not unmusical accent, and with a wave of the hand, as if to spare his new friends the making apology for their somewhat hasty demonstration.

"You are not, then, of either of those tribes?" said Hugh Gifford, to whom Armstrong had signed to act as spokesman.

"Of no tribe which my brothers have seen. We are too few to spread far over the land like the Sioux and Blackfeet, and my brother's track lay too far to the south. There are nearly as many leagues between Washashaco and the wigwams of his people as stretch from here to the Great Lake of Bitter Waters."

"Are you alone?"

There must have been a shade of anxiety in

Gifford's manner, which caused the slightest possible trace of amusement in that of the Indian, as he replied: "Not alone; but the braves who are with Washashaco are fewer than those of my brother."

"Will you bring your braves to our camp that they may also smoke a pipe with us?"

"They are a day's journey distant. They are watching the beavers, who are very cunning. Washashaco watches here. By-and-by we shall return to our homes laden with much spoil."

"But this is the country of the Utahs; have you no fear of their enmity?"

A haughty smile passed over the chief's swarthy countenance. "The Utahs are women. Shall we, who make dogs of the Pawnees and running hares of the Ottoes, swerve from our path for the Utahs? Besides, these Indians fight only with tomahawks and poisoned arrows; our Great Father has taken our lands, it is true, but he has given us arms which are very long. The French and Yengeese traders from the big lakes take rich skins from the red men, and give them short guns fit only for firewood; the people of my brother take most of our hunting grounds, but they give us long rifles, the better to hunt on those that are left."

His hearers looked instinctively for the Indian's arms.

"Washashaco's hands are empty. He knew his white brothers would not love him better for seeing

his rifle. He therefore left it with his horse in the thicket."

"Let him bring his horse and his arms into our camp. Let him partake of our meat and smoke of our pipe, that he may rest and refresh himself before he goes further on his way."

The Indian bowed with simple courtesy. "Wash-ashaco will do so," he said, and turning on his heel, he recrossed the stream to carry the invitation of Gifford into effect.

Hasty and many were the suggestions and observations which followed his departure.

"Can we trust him, d'ye think?" asked Seth, anxiously.

"I see his camp fire afore," said Dick Railes, "but thought it mought be Luke's or some of Ike's doin's."

"There may be others," surmised the Doctor, "on the other sides of us. To conceal their number and make sure of ours, this one may have come singly to lull us into security while the rest hem us securely in."

"Ye'd better git out the th'odolite, Doctor," suggested Dick with irony, "and find out how many there be."

"The man strikes me as honest," said Gifford, replying to Seth; "but be that as it may, to give him a meal and an ounce of tobacco can do no harm. If he means mischief, he can work it as well without as with them."

"And then ag'in there's a good many of us," mused Seth: "Injuns don't admire so many long range rifles, and we're twelve able-bodied men, to say nuthin' of Ike and Lion."

"'Twon't do to set too much store on numbers," warned Dick Railes, who had considerable doubts as to the fighting capacity of the Eastern men, or the "Yanks," as he styled them, and, if the truth must be told, more contempt for that of Hugh Gifford than for those of any of the others; for was he not a bookworm, a scholard, a lawyer,—all inconsistent with any probable success in arms? "Numbers is sometimes more hurt than good. They stirs up panic, numbers does; they lose their grip when fightin' time comes; ye can't be sure of ere a man that haint smelt powder."

"Come, come, Dick, don't skear us to death afore-hand. I guess the funkiest of us 'ud rather fight than lose a scalp without it, and that's about what it comes to if we're attackted."

"There's more danger of their starvin' ye to death," remarked Jabe Fitch, "at least so I've heerd. If ye meet 'em when they've been a long time without game, as they'll often be in the plains, they'll jest belt your grub anyway, if they don't your scalps; and we've a long way to travel yit."

"That's like Jabe, that is," laughed Dick. "He kears more for his belly than he does for his scalp, any day!"

"And why shouldn't I?" put Jabe, stoutly. "Ye can live without the one, and it's sartain ye can't without the other."

"All things considered," said the Doctor, "it may be as well to look sharp for both. But I agree with Gifford in thinking there's no harm in this man. The signs are much at fault if he's a bad specimen of his race."

"Signs don't go fur with Injuns," said the censorious Dick. "They're wuss than the old sarpint himself in not lettin' on what they mean to do."

"Any how," pursued Seth, "we'll be ready whatever happens. We'll hev' a double watch all the time, and keep an extra eye on the cattle, and be ready to move at any minute. If the wust comes to the wust, we ain't the only ones who've ever crossed the plains, nor the only ones who've had to fight their way through."

"Fight!" chimed in Nahum Pelter, with his deep bass voice, "there won't be no fight!"

"Why won't there?"

"There won't be no fight,—not with that man or his warriors,—leastways, not if he says there won't."

"And why not, I ask ye?" pressed Seth.

"Because he won't lie—he's a Delaware!"

"A Delaware!" exclaimed Hugh Gifford, "and in these western wilds!"

"Ay; Uncle Sam gave 'em hunting grounds out in West Kansas. They'd changed and changed as

the years rolled on, and the country got thicker settled, and the Injuns couldn't live near the whites, so at last they've got 'em clear into Kansas,—what there is left of 'em."

"And you think this is one of the tribe?"

"I'm sure on't; I know'd at first he weren't neither Pawnee, nor Creek, nor Sioux, nor Ottoe; but I didn't see the signs that told me what he was. I've known Delawares since I was knee high, and I never heerd o' their breaking their words."

"But what, think you, is the cause of his being so far from his hunting grounds?"

"That *is* puzzlin'; it can't be for huntin', it's no use to come so fur; it can't be for tradin', there's nothin' to trade and nobody to trade with. I take it there's only one thing else, and that is that he's on the War Path."

"But you don't think he means harm to ourselves, and who else is there to fight?"

"True enough, who?" repeated Seth. "He's the first red-skin we've seen for a fortnit."

"The country mought swarm with 'em," answered the Illinoisian, "and we not see one. There'd be two hostile parties, may be, each trying to circumvent the other, travellin' only at night, lurkin' in the valleys and gulches by day, or dodgin' and crawlin' on their bellies among the brush, weeks and weeks afore a war cry's heard or a scalp took. We not seein' 'em's no sure thing they ain't thar."

"It seems prudent, Mr. Armstrong," said Gifford, "to accept this Indian's presence as the evidence of others besides his own party being near. It may be as well to take it for granted, and to act as if we were sure of it."

"Them's my idees," corroborated Mr. Pelter. "But here comes the chief back again. P'raps he'll let on what he's up to himself—most likely, if no one asks him 'bout it."

The warrior now returned, this time bestriding a powerful mare, and carrying a formidable rifle. Luke Armstrong took charge of the former, notwithstanding her owner's courteous deprecation of the service, and Lion was soon reconciled to the unfamiliar presence on seeing its amicable relations with his friends. Washashaco readily partook of the refreshment offered him, and the whole party, with a mingling of curiosity, policy, and a large proportion of genuine kindness, vied with each other in offering him attentions. Mrs. Armstrong was, perhaps, an exception, for nothing could induce her to regard an Indian otherwise than with aversion and distrust. "They ain't Christians," she declared; "and it's agin Scripture to put your faith in the heathen. Lion knew the Evil One was about somewheres. Jest as like's not he'll cut all our throats in the night, and lug off our scalps afore breakfast."

"Dear Mrs. Armstrong," argued Mary Anne, "I've always heard that the Delawares were a noble race,

and most wandering tribes, they say, will always respect your confidence if they have broken bread and eaten salt with you."

"They tell that about the Arabs, I know," conceded the good lady; "but they're half Christians,—they ain't like these 'ere painted devils who go round howlin' and scalpin' folks."

"You've no call to be the least afeerd, Miss Kitty," said Dick Railes, who always availed of any excuse to get near that blooming damsel; "he's quite safe, and we're goin' to keep double watch to-night."

"Law, Richard, I'm not afraid," replied Kitty, saucily; "and if twelve men are not enough for one Indian, I'm sure four women would be."

"And what do *you* think of this chieftain?" Mary Anne asked of Hugh Gifford.

"Think? Why, that it would be more dangerous to appear to doubt than to trust him."

Washashaco said nothing of his objects, or those of his braves, during the day; and although the principal and most responsible members of the party were naturally anxious on the subject, they yet prudently forbore to question him. The Indian's eye roved unceasingly over their camp, their equipage, their cattle, and their arms; but otherwise he expressed neither curiosity nor surprise. Once, indeed, when Seth opened the rearward entrance to Castle Armstrong, and showed him its singular interior,

he uttered a characteristic "Ugh;" but this might have been elicited by satisfaction with the very obvious disgust of Mrs. Armstrong at the procedure, rather than by admiration of what he saw besides. During the day he preserved his silence, but at night, when all were assembled around the camp fire, and the females had retired, he expressed a desire to address his friends on a topic of common interest. The night was cooler than usual, and the wind hurtled mournfully through the cotton-woods and willows which stood on the banks of the stream. The camp fire was, therefore, made large and ruddy, and it cast a far-reaching glow over the picturesque scene which surrounded it. Pipes and whiskey had been produced; but although the Indian used the tobacco freely, he declined to touch the stimulant which has been the curse of so many of his race. The men mostly lay stretched on their robes and blankets in various attitudes of careless ease, for four of their number were circling the camp in vigilant patrol, and they were free to smoke in quiet. Seth Armstrong sat on one side, with Doctor Landale and Hugh Gifford supporting him on either hand,—the Indian seeming to regard the two, in their capacities of medicine man and spokesman, as somewhat elevated above the rest of the party. Washashaco, in dignified isolation, sat apart a short distance upon his crimson blanket. Not far off were Ichabod and Lion, both grave and attentive watchers of the pro-

ceedings. What with the long beards and gleaming eyes, the picturesque costumes, the bits of bright colour thrown out here and there by the dancing flames, and the intense solitude of the scene far around it, the group would have appeared to a spectator, to use the hackneyism, well worthy a painter's pencil.

There had been a long pause, purposely unbroken by his hosts, when the chief rose to his feet, and spoke:—

"My brothers have heard of the tribe of the Delawares. They were once very many, and very strong. They are now very few, but still strong, and will be so until the last of the Lenni Lenape shall join his fathers in the happy hunting-grounds. Their braves were once counted by tens of thousands, and there are now only a few poor hundreds; but the hundreds who remain are mighty warriors, and their deeds are not less brave than the deeds of those who have gone before.

"My brothers have heard how their fathers deprived the Delawares of their lands; it is an old story, and it cannot be pleasant to my brothers' ears. It cannot be pleasant to be told that their fathers did wrong, therefore I will not repeat it. I will only say that the Delawares came from the banks of the Ohio, as their fathers came from those of the Susquehanna; and that they came from the banks of the Mississippi, as they came from the banks of

the Ohio. The remnant of my tribe are now far from the mighty river, where they were told they should live for ever. They are now in the western plains of Kansas. If the Delawares were as numerous as they were when they first left the valley of the Susquehanna, they would be pushed on, and pushed on, until they were pushed at sunset into the Great Lake of Bitter Waters. But they are few, and their last warriors will be dead and forgotten before they can be driven to the great mountains.

"Old men say that one wrong brings on another; it is so with red men as well as white ones. The white men thrust the Delawares from their hunting-grounds, and the Delawares have been forced to thrust the Pawnees and Sioux from theirs. The Pawnees did not like to see the Delawares come into the land that had always been theirs. This was to be expected. They fight all the time; but the Delawares are better warriors, and kill far more braves than they lose. Still, they lose many, and grow fewer and fewer every year. This is a pity, but they cannot now, even if they would, return to the lands they have left behind. They will, therefore, remain and die, fighting.

"Three moons ago, a strong band of Pawnees made an attack upon one of our villages. It was at night, and most of the young men were absent hunting. The Pawnees burned the village, and killed some old women. They also drove off some

cattle. They were pursued, and divided into several parties. Washashaco, and the braves under his command, chased the party, which was led by their principal chief. After a little, the Pawnees discovered your train, and resolved to attack it. They did not do so because you were then near the Forts, and they were afraid. They followed, determined to surprise you after you should cross the mountains, and so be far distant from the soldiers of your Great Father. I and my braves have followed them cautiously, knowing every step they have taken. They think the Delawares have returned to their camp. Four days ago they were short of food, and they stopped to hunt. I hastened on, and gained some distance, leaving my braves to watch their course. The Pawnees will soon attack the camp of my brothers; but Washashaco and his young men will help them to fight."

The address of the chief had been thus far received in unbroken silence; but when it arrived at this startling peroration, a hum of anxiety and exclamation ran round the circle. Seth raised his hand, imposing continued silence; and Gifford rose.

"We have listened," he said, "with interest and attention, and we hope we shall be good friends both with Washashaco and his warriors. But why is it,—since the Delawares have been injured by the white men,—why is it that they should offer to assist white men against their enemies?"

"Because," answered the chief, gravely, "because the Delawares are at peace with the white men, and at war with their red enemies; because the Delawares and my brothers together can fight the Pawnees, but would not be strong enough to fight them singly, for they are many; and because, though there are some Delawares who do not like white men, there are no Delawares but who hate Pawnees. Is my brother answered?"

Gifford bowed assent, and continued, "What, then, is the number of the Pawnees?"

"When we first struck their trail," said Washashaco, "they counted over three-score; but some have left them by the way."

"Three-score!" exclaimed Nahum Pelter, with a dismayed whistle, "that's five to one, I reckon."

"My big brother forgets the braves of Washashaco."

"And how many are they?"

"There are nine besides Washashaco."

"Chief!" said Seth, anxiously, "how do ye know where the Pawnees air now? How do ye know but they might come upon us at any moment; p'raps this very night?"

"Because, had they been near enough to strike, the Delawares would have been here to warn their chief long before the sun went to sleep."

"But were your people to approach this neighbourhood," said Gifford, "how are they to discover you? Our sentinels are wary, and should the Dela-

wares approach the camp, may mistake them for enemies."

"My braves are not geese," replied the warrior, "and they know that my white brothers are here. When they arrive they will be half a day's journey in advance of the Pawnees, for they are well mounted, and know where to come. They will seek Washashaco in a spot where he has lately been. They will find that he is in safety and close at hand. Had any accident befallen him they would know that, too. Should they come by night or by day, Washashaco will know it; and they will not enter your camp until they are invited by their white brothers."

The party were fain to rest content with these assurances, although it became evident to the boldest that their situation was a critical one. If the chief's statements and opinions could be implicitly relied upon, the chance for protecting their lives and property was by no means too good; while, if he were playing them false, it must be with a design whose fruition was likely to be yet more fatal to their security. The latter theory, however, none were ready to maintain; the opinion, that it would be well to keep a close watch upon Washashaco, constituting its strongest expression. As for the chief himself, having said what he came to say, he had folded himself in his blanket, and quietly gone to sleep by the camp fire. Most of the others were wakeful, naturally enough, and remained a long

time in anxious and thoughtful counsel. Ike and Lion lay down trustingly together next to the red man, and dropped into their customary slumbers; but it was long before their comrades desisted from their whispered consultations, and the small hours were creeping on ere the little camp was once more buried in repose.

CHAPTER VII.

THE sweet air of the morning was just stealing over the earth when Mary Anne left her couch; and the rosy fingers of Aurora had not quite swept away the deep and tender blue which still lingered in the west. The girl stole down to the tiny beach of yellow sand which margined the rippling stream to get water for her morning ablutions. She glanced as she went toward the camp fire; it was burning yet, or rather smouldering in its tumbling *débris* of white ashes, and the robe-wrapped figures huddled about it were motionless in slumber. By the ford lower down the stream, she saw a figure leaning statue-like against a tree. His rifle was clasped in the arms folded across his chest, while the breach rested on the ground. The head of the sentinel drooped forward heavily, and he, too, seemed fast asleep. It was very, very still, but, as always happens, it seemed more silent because there were certain sounds to remind one of the absence of others. Such were the deep breathing of the sleepers, the gentle swirling of the stream, and the confused trilling of some early birds.

The girl completed her toilet undisturbed. She arranged some details of her dress, and bound into a simple knot the great masses of black hair which had previously fallen below her waist. Close by was a smooth pool, caused by an accidental eddy, and darkened by a little shrubbery beside it. Into this, with a natural impulse, she looked, as she adjusted her tresses as if to mark the final effect.

"But that Miss Armstrong is so free from vanity," said a low voice behind her, "one might think her in danger of the fate of Narcissus."

She was called Miss Armstrong by the party, just as the young lady to whom that designation belonged was universally known as Kitty; and Hugh Gifford, finding she did not object, so styled her. She looked up with a quick blush.

"Mr. Gifford is not often lavish of even implied compliments; but, since he has grown classical and speaks of fate, he shouldn't forget that of Actæon."

"Indeed, I only came as the *coiffure* approached its conclusion,—an offence not punishable, I hope, even in the eyes of the most severe of Dianas. What a lovely morning! and how calm and peaceful everything appears; thank Heaven, we are all safe thus far!"

"You think we are in danger, then?"

"You know nothing of what passed last night?"

"I do. Kitty and I were uneasy after the arrival of the Indian. We yielded to the natural propensity

of our sex, and listened from the waggon. Poor child! She was in mortal terror."

"And you?"

"I? I accustomed myself to the idea that danger was inevitable in crossing the plains. I ran some risks to enable myself to do so. I have lately endured a great, a desolating affliction. Perhaps, therefore, I am not so appalled at the chance of peril."

"I really apprehend that chance is serious. The men will fight well, if need be, without doubt. But I fear we may be assailed by overwhelming numbers."

"Why not fly, push on as fast as possible, and so escape?"

"Impossible. These heavy waggons could never keep ahead of the horses of our pursuers; and to abandon them is to risk starvation; besides, the chief would be dissatisfied by such an attempt, even if he did not essay forcibly to oppose it."

"Why should he do so?"

"He thinks of nothing but glory. Why should he be here? Why acquaint us with the designs of our enemies? Simply because he hopes to win a triumph over them, and carry back their scalps to the lodges of his people. He would not regard with favour any policy on our part which would render an encounter less probable."

"But he is sanguine of success?"

"He counts upon it as certain."

"And if it should be otherwise?"

"You mean should we be overcome?"

"Yes."

"The men would probably all be killed; the women carried into captivity."

"That I for one would not be. Still you do not think our case really desperate?"

"By no means. We have many advantages of position. This stream covers us pretty effectually on nearly three sides. We can barricade the fourth, so as to obtain all the advantage of a fortified position. As to provisions and water, we are abundantly supplied; so that if the enemy attempt a siege, we need not dread it. Meantime, there is always a hope that some other and more numerous party of our own race may chance this way and reinforce us."

He spoke lightly, but there was a gravity in his eye, and the habitual compression of the lips was slightly increased. Mary Anne went on as though answering what she saw in his thoughts rather than what fell from his mouth.

"I don't know that I should fear to die," she said, musingly, "or much regret it. True, I had hoped to be of some small use in the world. What they taught me might be useless for myself, considering what my future station is likely to be. But all these busy ones thronging to the land of gold — they must have children, and I could teach them, and so be

not altogether a useless clod—a cumberer of the earth!"

She had spoken of this scheme before, and Hugh seeing it was a somewhat cherished one, had applauded it as an honourable and useful career for her to adopt. But he had thought before, and he thought now, as he gazed on the girl's striking face, and remembered her many attractions, that, in a land where women are few, such a one would find plenty to dissuade her from the arduous toils of a school-teacher.

"What is life," continued Mary Anne, with more bitterness than was usual with her, "What is life, when one has nothing to make life dear? The home, the cherished scenes, the faithful friends, and more, far more than all, the adored father—gone, all gone and for ever—why should I wish to live? Without father, without home, without friends——"

"Do not say without friends," interrupted Gifford, gently. "I am sure this worthy family are your good friends, and Kitty dearly loves you. Do not say without friends; for I—I—if you will let me call myself so, I will always be a friend to you."

"You will?"

"I will."

"You promise it, then?"

"Faithfully."

"I shall remember—and perhaps call upon you some time to remember."

"Now and always. And for now, since it is one of a friend's offices to tell truths, let me offer you one. A woman with youth and beauty—I do not flatter, recollect, for I am only a friend—with youth and beauty, such as yours should despair of nothing. The loss of friends, indeed, she may deplore, for it is irreparable. But there is nothing else, no other loss but it can be supplied, and more. Youth, health, loveliness—they can compass anything!"

"Anything?"

"Why not? They can procure fortune."

"Dross!"

"Ah! you have never wanted it. Fame——"

"That is more valuable."

"Love——"

"Love!" she exclaimed, as the colour rose in her pure olive cheek—"Love! No! They cannot procure love!"

"Believe me, they can. More surely than all else beside."

"Are you sure of it?" she asked, archly; and turning her lustrous black eyes full on his face, "With your particular experience do you feel so sure?"

Gifford coloured in turn. "You know exceptions are admitted to prove general rules. But my argument is that you have everything to hope—a bright, a cherished, a courted future! Contrast your case with mine. I see nothing before me but a long

miserable struggle with poverty, before which I may succumb at last."

"You have also youth—you have talents—ambition."

"The first and last, perhaps; but, unlike you, I have no happy past to recur to, to show me that life may sometimes be bright and beautiful. The vista behind is grim, cheerless, and desolate, and I have no right to assume that it will be different with me in the future. My life has been all bitterness. I have partaken unwillingly of the bitter cup of the Puritans, who settled in the rocky land that bore me. The draught has been flavoured with all of asceticism, intolerance, hardship, they ever knew or I most loathe, without the enthusiasm which enabled them to drain it to the dregs, or the perversity which enabled them to call it nectar. I have no friends whom I can esteem; there are none who love me."

"None who love you! You forget Virginia!"

She was quite right; more than once in this conversation had Hugh forgotten Virginia; but the reproach, while he felt it to be just, nettled him at the moment, and he said, hastily,—

"Were I to tell her as much as I have now told you, she would think me as crazy as poor Ike there; and so I should be to tell it with the hope of sympathy."

"Then why——" the girl reddened, stammered, and paused. It was doubtful whether she felt more

of relief or annoyance when the cheery call of Kitty Armstrong came to her aid by summoning her to the inside of the Castle. However, she flew to respond to it, and left Gifford standing absorbed in thought upon the strand.

Looking up, he saw in the act of crossing from the opposite bank the tall figure of the chieftain, who had evidently forestalled his hosts, early as their rising had been.

"Washashaco is up before the sun," said Gifford, as he saluted him. "Has he seen anything of interest this morning?"

There was the slightest smile of polite irony on the Indian's face, as he replied:—

"I saw the White Fawn talking with my brother, and I saw her run away into the moving wigwam."

"Has the chief any tidings of his braves?"

"None. The Pawnees are bad hunters as well as bad warriors, and they have found no deer. Or they have fallen in with another party of their tribe, and will come in greater numbers."

"Should they do so our chance to resist them will be but small."

"They are dogs. Great in feasting; great when their young men drag at their heels the skin of the polecat; great in becoming hogs when they get at the white man's fire-water; but small on the War Path, and like children when they encounter the Delawares."

"The Delawares are valiant, and their white friends will fight hard; but can they hope to do wonders? Can they make one rifle equal to ten?"

"Is my brother afraid?"

A hot flush rose to Gifford's brow, but he restrained his anger, and answered gently, "He has not yet been in battle, and perhaps makes the danger greater than it is. Most of his people think they can conquer against five times their number of Indians."

"The white men have better guns, and the red men have more cunning. But this place can be made strong, like the forts of the soldiers at Leavenworth. Very few can hold it against very many."

The sleepers by this time were awake and stirring, and Ichabod, having approached the spot where the chief and Gifford stood, thought this a favourable moment to join in their deliberations.

"Ike kin hold it alone," he remarked, gravely; "Ike and Lion. We kin hold it agin all the red skins 'twixt here and the Mississippi. There ain't ne'er an Injun 'ud dare fire a gun if they knew Ike was anywheres round. He can do all the fightin' and all the gold findin', he kin; only he won't tell ye 'bout the gold, cause it's bad for ye. Small good in gittin' things for nuthin'. Lion works for his dinner, and gits a good appetite."

He was a strange figure enough with his shock of red hair, his cap of bearskin, with its extravagantly

long plumes; his hunting shirt, with its grotesque ornaments of beads and feathers, and bits of fur; his assured speech, and his ungainly action. But the Indian regarded him with a countenance immoveable as stone.

"P'raps ye'd like some gold, chief? P'raps *you'd* like to cook your elk in a gold pot, and wear a crown from now to never? Ike knows where it is—more'n they ever found in Mexico, or Golcondy, or Peroo! More'n they ever piled inter the mint at Philedelfy! Acres of it—mountains of it—so ye kin have yer wigwams, and yer canoes, and yer tomahawks, and yer huntin' knives, all of bright, pure, beautiful, yaller gold!"

"My brother is laughing," said Washashaco, sententiously.

"D'ye know what we're goin' to do? We're goin' to sail in bime by, and jest take the 'hull continent, and drive out the Britishers, and the Rooshians, and the redskins, and the greasers, and annex Canady, and gobble up Cuby, and clean out the 'hull lot of 'em! That's what we're goin' to do. And every man shall have two farms, and live on milk, and honey, and elk-meat, and hoe-cake, and never do any work 'cept when he goes to Congress! And Ike's to be the president one week, turn about, and Lion another! Hooray! for Ike the Fust, and the 'Murikun eagle!' Hooray!"

And he began his strange performance of capering

and leaping about, and covering himself with his buffalo robe, at which Lion, as usual, assumed that he was a bear, and attacked him furiously accordingly. The Indian looked at him stedfastly for a space, and then a light crept over his bronzed and haughty features.

"My brother is possessed of the Great Spirit," he said, reverently, "and no red man would do him harm; but they might not always respect his friends."

The camp was now all bustle and activity. The females were preparing the morning meal, and the men were hard at work moving the waggons into a position which would cause them, so far as they could extend, to describe a chord of the arc formed by the little stream. On the right, with its back to the river, was the *corral* where the cattle were placed; a situation more secure than that on the left where lay the ford. It was believed that no enemy would risk an attack on the water-side, thus giving the greatest possible advantages to the defence; and it, therefore, seemed prudent to strengthen the open or land approach as much as possible. The soil was extremely hard and stony, and to attempt to throw up a breastwork of earth, would, it was judged, be impracticable, or, if practicable, involve too much exhausting labour; and it was expedient to keep their small number as fresh and unexhausted as safety would permit.

On a small knoll which separated the *corral* from

the space forming the immediate camp, stood a copse of timber, almost the only wood of any moment in sight. There was, it is true, a thin fringe of cotton-woods scattered along the banks of the rivulet; but they were few and sparse, and afforded little cover. The copse in question, however, chiefly consisting of hard, gnarly mahogany of the scrub description found in this region, was so close and thick as to afford considerable protection. Here, after careful consultation, Castle Armstrong was now planted, to serve as a refuge for the women, and, indeed, as a kind of citadel to the fortress.

Seth Armstrong, having slept on the intelligence received the night before, was possessed in the morning with the idea that the intervention of poor Ichabod might be made as useful in the event of an attack from the Pawnees as it had been on a previous occasion; but Washashaco, now apprized of the latter incident, and having seen the hero of it, shook his head, on its being suggested that such a result might again be hoped for. The Pawnees, he represented, would in all probability attempt a surprise; in such a case, how should they know or care that any one possessed of the Great Spirit had made the party contraband of war? In such a tone, if not in such precise terms, he opposed any reliance on Ike's mediation. The truth was, the warrior desired no other result than that the issue should be squarely fought out to what he regarded as its legitimate

conclusion, and used every argument his eloquence could suggest against flight, diplomacy, strategy, or any other ignoble substitute for battle.

Preparations for hostilities were, therefore, pushed with the utmost speed; preparations intelligible enough to all the assembly save poor Mrs. Armstrong, who looked on them with a dubiousness which, as they progressed, gave place to terror. Her appeals to the two young women failing to elicit satisfactory replies, she had recourse to Luke: "What on airth is the matter, Luke? I knew that dreffful heathen was come for no good; but do they really expect we shall git attackted? Oh, Lord! oh, Lord! nothin' never did come but harm from havin' to do with the Evil One! What *will* they do with us if they take us all prisoners? And these 'ere poor gals, too! Arter all it's lucky I didn't bring my chinay!"

Luke reassured his mother as well as he could; there was by no means a certainty of their being attacked—only a chance; but it was well to be ready for anything. The chief was very friendly, and had come to warn and not to harm them; moreover, he had others of his tribe near at hand, who, in case of need, would fly to their assistance. These assurances were received with obstinate incredulity; so Mary Anne, who had been followed everywhere during the explanation by Luke's admiring eyes, relieved herself and him by coming to his support.

Meanwhile, sturdy Doctor Landale was getting ready lint and bandages with the same equanimity that marked his daily observations. "You'd better learn how to apply a tourniquet," he remarked to Hugh Gifford, "in case I happen to get hit. These Western men have remedies of their own for most simple hurts, but they've nothing to substitute for that." And Hugh did learn it as well as was possible in the hour which elapsed before breakfast. When that hour arrived, the dispositions for defending the camp were tolerably complete. Washashaco, truly, had some suggestions to make, but it would answer, he said, if they were carried into effect after the meal. The sentries were now called in, to be replaced as quickly as possible by others.

"All here," said Seth Armstrong, "all here, and, thank GOD, all safe!" as the different members of the little company came flocking in toward the kettles. The worthy man paused a little, meaning to say a word or two in more formal recognition of the mercies they enjoyed, and a strange murmur arose among the assemblage. "All here," somebody repeated. "Not all I reckon, unless twelve's the same as thirteen!" And, "Who is it, who is it?" ran from one to the other, as each looked at and counted his neighbours. It was one of the young Irishmen, one of the labourers whom Seth had engaged at St. Louis.

"Why," cried Luke, "Dennis was placed sentry at two o'clock at the Ford!"

"So he was," exclaimed Gifford, "and he was there, safe enough, at daybreak, for I saw him. I do believe," he continued, as his thoughts flew back over the time, "I do believe the fellow was asleep, though!"

"Asleep!" repeated Seth; "then like enough he's asleep still. That won't do!"

"Do," cried Dick Railes, "I should think not; if men's goin' to sleep on watch, with the country swarmin' with red-skins, we'll git shot off like so many woodchucks!"

"Come," said Gifford, rising, "let's hear what he's got to say; perhaps the poor fellow's unwell."

"Ay, ay," echoed Seth, kindly; "we'll go and see what he says for himself."

The men started for the Ford; only a short twenty rods to go. The sentinel was still there; still leaning against the tree, with his arms folded across his breast, and the clasped rifle resting on the ground.

"Dennis!" cried Luke, as they approached. There was no reply, and the party quickened their steps until they stood by the man's side. He was lashed to the tree by a cord passing around the waist; a knife was buried to the hilt in his side, and the man was dead—stone dead.

All gazed for a moment in silent horror; then a shout went up—

"Washashaco! The Chief! The Indian! Where is he?"

But the Delaware had vanished, and was nowhere to be found.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE day was passed by the wayfarers in gloom and anxiety. It was evident that they were surrounded by unseen enemies, and where the stroke would fall next none could tell. The sudden disappearance of the Delaware naturally led to the belief that he was knowing of the assassination of the unfortunate sentry, if, indeed, he was not himself the actual murderer. But, if so, why should he have come into their midst to warn them of coming danger? And if such a course had been adopted with the sinister design alone of learning their numbers and means of defence, why, after obtaining that knowledge, should he have returned, thus incurring the risk of being set face to face with the corpse of Dennis, and being charged with his murder? The latter objection was most conclusive to Hugh Gifford, as opposed to the hypothesis of the Indian's guilt; for he remembered his conversation with him in the morning, which took place within easy hail of the spot where Dennis stood, and when there was each moment the greatest probability of the deed being detected. Certainly it seemed strange that Washashaco should have made

his way across the ford in the morning unchallenged by Dennis, who stood close by it, but might not the deed have been wrought as probably before the chief set out as afterwards,—and might not the apathy of the sentry be thus accounted for? On the other hand, if Washashaco were innocent, why should he throw a cloud over his conduct, by absconding without a word of explanation at the critical moment of discovery?

These were doubts and fears not easy to be resolved, and the more they were canvassed the more threatening the prospect appeared for the future. Upon one point all were agreed, which was that they must henceforth practise redoubled vigilance, and leave no precaution unemployed which might avert the further reduction of their scanty numbers. To this end they determined that it would be imprudent to send out scouts, and that, should they remain unmolested throughout the day, the most intelligent and wary of the party should serve that night as sentinels. For it was remarkable that no one could be found who had heard the slightest noise during the night before. Not a growl from Lion, usually so watchful, not the rustle of a leaf had served as a warning sign or had betrayed the stealthy foot of the assassin. They must, therefore, watch to-night with increased wariness if they would not share the fate of their luckless companion.

"As to gittin' shot in a fair fight," growled Nahum Pelter in his deep bass voice, "every man expects it,

I reckon, and jest travels on his chances. But this here skewerin' of ye onawares in the dark rakes me down altogether. It ain't my style, that ain't. I don't s'pose the poor Paddy was good for much," he continued, chewing ponderously, and ejecting regretful spirts of tobacco-juice. "I don't s'pose the poor cuss had much grit in him for a bush fight—but I'm sorry for him, I am,—and a rifle less is a rifle less when we come to the scratch."

Dr. Landale, who was gliding about sounding the spirit and temper of the men just as he would feel their pulses, questioned Pelter as to how he thought, in the event of a fight, the men would behave.

"Think they'll fight? Wall, I reckon all the Westerners will. They're born fighters, they are; I don't feel so stiff about the Yanks; there's two kinds o' Yanks, wooden nutmeg Yanks, and book-learnin' ones; I don't think there's much fight in neither of 'em. Still they may do well enough behind the wagons; and ef they don't run at the fust fire they'll be apt to be darned obstinate arterwards. But the Western boys there, Luke and Dick in pettikilar, they'll fight like h—, they will. And I calkilate I'm good for about ten Injus, I am: that's so."

With which comfortable assurance the giant launched forth a fresh cataract of saliva, and stalked away to prepare his armament. Hugh Gifford was more generous in his estimate of Nahum's prowess.

"These western countrymen of yours brag so

consumedly," observed the Doctor, "that by all accepted rules of probability and precedent they should prove feeble if not cowardly in action."

"I firmly believe they will do all that men can do," answered Hugh, "if not all that they promise. This inflated talk is a mere matter of habit, and no true test of the nature of the man. Braggarts are often brave men on this side the water, as, I fancy, coxcombs often are on the other. But I believe there are no people about whom old-fashioned saws and accepted axioms are more frequently falsified than the Americans."

"Humph," grumbled the Doctor; "that means, I suppose, that they are of stuff so different from ordinary mortals that they are not to be judged by the laws which history and experience have established—a modern chosen people made to order, who are to have new codes for social organization, new philosophies for intellectual development, because the humdrum affairs which have taken some thousands of years to grow are not good enough for their purpose, eh?"

"No," said Hugh, smiling, "only that the conditions which surround them—intellectual and physical—are so very different from those of any people of whom we have any authentic record, that we must not expect their progress or achievements to precisely square with those of any people whose histories we possess."

"We're like to hev' a hard time on't, gentlemen," said Seth, coming up. "I did hope to git across all safe and sound when we'd come so far as the Mountains; but we've had an uncommon easy journey, and I suppose it weren't in the natur' of things that the path should be allers smooth. This poor lad who's gone may be's only a day before all the rest on us; but we must try and do our dooty like men. I shouldn't kear so much," he added in a lower tone, "if it weren't for the women folks. It hurts me pooty bad to see mother goin' on as she is now —and them two poor gals ain't fit either to die or to fall into the hands of them devils of Injuns. Howsumever, please GOD, they shan't if we can help it."

"Amen," said Hugh and the Doctor, while Seth passed on busy as he was in planning and arranging to make the stronghold as secure as possible. The others stood for a moment in silence, when the Doctor spoke: "The good man doesn't see that the presence of the women makes his camp twice as strong as it would otherwise be. What think you?"

"I? I am sure of it."

"I suppose," continued the Doctor, "that there's no great chance of availing ourselves of poor Ichabod's misfortune?"

"I fear not; for whether he plays us true or false, the chief's argument on that subject seems

unanswerable. The Pawnees will, without doubt, attempt a surprise; and, in that case, it matters little whether he be with us or not, except that he knows how to pull a trigger. But come, we should do our share toward the fortifications."

The two men then followed Seth to the line of the waggons, which were now connected, after a fashion, by a hasty *abattis* made of such rough brush and bits of timber as the men had been able to collect, and strengthened by ox chains interlaced through them. Dick Railes and Nahum Pelter, while approving this arrangement, did not fail to warn the others that the Indians, should they attempt an assault, would certainly try to set this barricade on fire as a preliminary, but all hoped that, with the aid of their revolvers, they could make an approach too hazardous for them to face its risks. All the extra guns and pistols were carefully examined, loaded, and placed in Castle Armstrong, while the females—including Mrs. Armstrong, who was now aroused to the necessity of exertion—were actively engaged in rehearsing and making sure of their accomplishment of rapid loading. To guard against the dangers of fire, all the pails and other utensils they possessed were now filled with water at the river, and placed at convenient points under the waggons.

In such labours the day wore on, and the sun again disappeared in the west, yet still there were

no signs of an enemy. Every one appeared, however, to feel that the coming night was the most critical period of their fate, and a thrill of anxiety ran through the little party when the time arrived for placing the sentries. Somewhat to the surprise of the western men, and yet to the obvious satisfaction of most of the company, Hugh Gifford insisted upon being placed at the perilous station by the Ford, where poor Dennis had lost his life the night before. "The place is important," he said. "I feel no need of sleep, and my mind will be the easier for being there." It was finally agreed that Luke and Dr. Landale should hold the post until two o'clock, and that they should then be relieved by Gifford and Ike—Seth Armstrong insisting that at that particular place, at least, there should be two sentries for the night. There were three others posted along the line of the waggons, and as Seth inwardly resolved that some one in addition should remain awake in the Castle, he felt tolerably secure against surprise.

In accordance with these arrangements, Hugh determined to force himself, if possible, to sleep in the early part of the night, in order that he might be thoroughly wakeful at the dangerous period of his watch. Whether or no he saw a design shaping itself in the expressive face of Mary Anne when she heard that he and Ike were to be on watch after two is doubtful; but it is certain that, after the band had shared their unusually quiet and thoughtful supper,

he found his way to where the girl was standing by the Castle, looking sorrowfully upon the ground. He laid his hand upon her arm.

"You will not leave the Castle to-night, Miss Armstrong."

"You are sure I meant to do so, then?—But why not?"

"There is danger in it—real danger—to which you must not be exposed."

"And you?"

"It is my duty—some one must do it—I as well as others. But on you there is no such demand."

"I have no fear."

"But I have—on your account; and I beg you not to come."

"You particularly wish me not to come?"

"Yes; I request, I beg it."

"Then I will not. Only——"

"Only what?"

"Promise me one thing."

"What is it?"

"Nay, but promise."

"Well then, I promise."

"That you will run no needless risks—that you will take care of yourself."

"I am sure to do that," said Hugh, smiling.

"Ah, you are jesting—you are not sincere. Remember the promise should be as grave, as fully meant to be implicitly kept, as mine."

"Indeed it shall be then."

"Good night then—and—and—Heaven guard you!"

The voice was tremulous, and Hugh turned quickly in some surprise to look at Mary Anne's face,—yet even had she stood still he would scarce have seen it, for the dusk was gathering fast,—but she had fled away and joined Mrs. Armstrong and Kitty in the Castle. So Hugh returned to the camp fire, and wrapping himself in a buffalo skin, lay down to sleep. His mind was ranging rapidly over many and opposite themes, and he found it no easy task to forget his consciousness; but with perseverance he at last succeeded, and fell into a gentle slumber.

At the appointed hour he was awakened by Luke:—

"I wouldn't rouse ye, Mr. Gifford, but I suppose we must be strict now in obeying orders."

"Quite right. All has been quiet, I suppose?"

"Not a critter stirring; not so much as a night-hawk or an owl. The Doctor's been makin' what he calls astral observations."

"Where are Ike and Lion?"

"Oh, they've been up this half-hour watchin' the Doctor. I think Ike's got an idea that he ought to keep about, so that if the Injuns come he could pack 'em off as he did afore."

Hugh shook his head. "They won't come in a way to leave time for parley. That chance before

was one in a thousand. We've no right to count on such luck twice."

"No, I reckon not. I do wish some more of our folks would happen by. That would be the best luck that could befal us now. It makes my heart sick, Mr. Gifford, when I think of mother and those two gurls, and that we mayn't be strong enough to defend 'em."

"We musn't think of that—we *will* be strong enough."

"*She* dropped this out of her bosom by the wagon this evening, and as I was going to be where poor Dennis met his death, I thought it might serve as a sort of talisman like, and that she wouldn't miss it until to-morrow morning; so I put it here over my heart."

As he spoke, Luke held in his hand a small, morocco-bound volume. Gifford took it mechanically, and looked at it by the light of the fire. It was a Testament: and as he turned it over it opened at the fly-leaf, and he saw there written, in small but distinct characters, the name—

"MARIAN ROOKE."

And as he returned the volume, by the same light of the fire he looked into Luke Armstrong's honest eyes, and then Gifford saw for the first time that Luke loved her.

"Strange," he thought, as he went to his watch, "passing strange. And yet, why strange? Is it

remarkable that a fine, honest, young fellow, strong, comely, well-principled, should fall in love with a beautiful girl—a poor girl, too, with nothing but her own exertions to depend upon for subsistence; is it strange that Luke should love, ay, or marry her? Is it not, rather, natural? True, there may be something incongruous between their manners, their educations; but in a new country, where the strong arm and the manly spirit are the main stays for protection and sustenance, what matter?"

So reasoned Hugh as he stood in the starlight, glancing up and down the stream, now looking before him, now behind, ever vigilant as feeling the deep responsibility of his trust.

"What matter?" he mused, his thoughts running into a frequent channel; "What matter for culture, reflection, intellectual graces? In a country like this, it is the capacity for rude toil, the power which accumulates and retains material things alone which is desirable, for it alone gains leadership or distinction. What matter? That a woman full of refinement and rich in feminine delicacy, highly educated, keenly appreciative, should love and wed a rustic, hard-handed ploughman! A mere boor! No, no, that is unjust; Luke is not so bad as that; a good fellow with a sound heart and plenty of common sense, if not much book-learning; and, perhaps, after all, she may fancy him; stranger things have been."

Here Hugh began to think that somehow it *did*

matter, notwithstanding his subtle arguments to the contrary. He fell to envying Luke.

"Something to love—something to love! What a hope, what a daily pleasure, what a nightly consolation!" His eye fell on Ike and Lion sitting together at a little distance. The man's arm was thrown caressingly round the dog's neck, and he seemed to be whispering to the creature, as, indeed, he often did. "There; what a comfort does that poor fellow hourly enjoy in the affection even of a dumb beast, while I——"

Here his conscience gave the dreamer a sudden twinge; for was he not also blessed—blessed with the love of Virginia?

A cool night breeze came hurtling and sighing through the melancholy trees, and seemed to answer the question sadly enough. At the same moment Gifford heard a muffled cry, like the distant shriek of an owl. "Some signal, perhaps," he thought, and he grasped his rifle more tightly and peered more anxiously into the obscure around him.

A log came floating gently down the river, and slid into the shadow of the bank beneath the spot where he stood. The next instant a figure rose as if from under his feet, and, as swiftly, Gifford's rifle was at its breast.

"My brother will not shoot," said the calm, deep voice of Washashaco; "he will not fire upon the friend who trusts him."

The young man hesitated: "One of our number has been treacherously slain when Washashaco was our guest; when we discovered the crime, Washashaco had fled away, and could no longer be found."

"He knew that his white brothers might doubt him," returned the chief quietly; "but when he saw that the Pawnees were at hand, it was needful that he should at once find and talk to his braves. There is little time to tell stories on the War Path."

"You say that the Pawnees are at hand?"

"One of their scouts made his way hither unperceived by the Delawares. He crept on the ground like a snake, and surprised the white man who stood here last night. Something frightened him, and he crawled away taking neither his scalp nor his rifle."

"When knew you that this deed had been done?"

"Washashaco saw that the man was missing when his brothers assembled to eat. He passed quickly this way, and found him dead: then he crossed the river, and struck the trail of the Indian who had slain him: at noon he came up with him in the mountains and took his scalp. Behold!"

Gifford turned with disgust from the ghastly trophy. "And where are my brother's young men —the braves of his tribe?"

"One is close at hand, the others a few miles away."

"And the Pawnees?"

"About as far, but in another direction. My braves thought they would remain for another day to rest, but the one who has come thinks otherwise; he thinks they will be here to-morrow. Washashaco, therefore, sent him at sunset to bring up his warriors at once."

"How numerous are the enemy?"

"They are very many. My brothers will have to fight hard. But they can depend upon the Delawares. I go to lead them hither."

Gifford paused and reflected. He was in doubt as to the wisest course for him to pursue. Ought he not, now that the chief was in their power, to insist on his remaining in the camp; at least until the imminence of the danger was passed, or until further investigation could be made as to the murder of the sentry?

"Will it not be better for Washashaco to remain with his white brothers? They will then be satisfied of his friendship, and that he had no hand in the killing of their friend. He can fight here with his brothers, if they are attacked, as well as elsewhere. Will he not remain?"

"The Delawares will not fight well without their chief. Washashaco must go to lead them."

Hugh again hesitated. "His brothers thought it

unfriendly of Washashaco to leave them without farewell at the moment they had lost one of their number." He stopped, not knowing exactly how to suggest a doubt without giving offence.

"Washashaco's ears are open."

"I may be blamed for not urging him to remain until they can see him to shake hands with him in the morning."

The Indian looked intently on the speaker with his dark, glittering eyes: "My brother doubts the good faith of Washashaco?"

"I do not, but others, perhaps——"

"Listen," said the red man, sternly. "I go to bring my braves to the help of my white brothers. I will not remain in their camp. I will shake hands with you in sign of faith with all. A chief of the Delawares cannot lie. I have spoken."

He stretched forth his hand as he concluded with an air of command so princely, that Gifford could not repress a thrill of secret admiration. During the colloquy, too, the dog Lion had approached, and, recognizing Washashaco, gave every indication of pleasure and confidence. The Indian looked down and smiled.

"Be it so," said Gifford with decision, and grasping the proffered hand, "I will tell my friends that the Delaware chief will not fail them in their hour of need."

"Let them be watchful as the lynx, for the

Pawnees are many and cunning. The battle may be long and fierce, but the victory will be the more glorious. I go."

"Farewell, then, brave warrior. The battle has many chances, and we may meet no more."

"The Delawares are taught to carry their lives in their hands, and they know that their time on the earth is short," said Washashaco solemnly. "The Great Spirit has ordered that my people shall disappear one by one from their old homes, and that the children of the white man shall take their places. A few years, more or less, matter little to Washashaco or his braves, and if they die gloriously, they care not when their hour may come. They may die; but they will remain faithful to the mighty memories of their race. The children of the Lenni Lenape will not give their fathers cause to blush in the happy hunting grounds. To the last, the name of the Delaware, driven from his lands, broken in numbers, fading away, like a mist, though he is, shall be respected and terrible among all the tribes of the red men! Their footsteps are far from their ancient home, and their bones will whiten the prairie a long way from the graves of their fathers; but their spirits will dwell in the land for ever! They will roam at will through the forests and the plains, they will lie on the banks of their own loved rivers, and listen to the sound of the mighty cataract! And they will wander freely over the hunting grounds,

which once were theirs, long after the last red man has been taken from the earth, and the memory even of the race which succeeds him shall be forgotten!"

The chieftain was silent, and ere the last deep tones of his voice had ceased to vibrate, he had folded his blanket about him, and his tall form had glided swiftly away into the darkness.

CHAPTER IX.

THE sun was some hours high, and the little band were awaiting, in sullen expectancy, the onset of savages, which now seemed inevitable. For since daybreak they had seen, at several points among the hills behind them, curling puffs of smoke, which not only told that the Indians were near, but, what was still more ominous, that their numbers made concealment needless.

The sun was some hours high, yet he gave only an imperfect light. It was one of those heavy, vaporous atmospheres which, when we feel they carry no moisture, seem so inexplicable; an atmosphere often seen on deserts where no water is, or in climates which have dry seasons long protracted. The sun's rays, struggling through the murky air, gave a sickly, yellow light, and the luminary himself looked a dull, red ball.

The mountains east of the camp appeared shadowy and dim; the clear outlines and tangible colours, seen by the party on the hopeful eve when they descended to the banks of the stream, were no longer visible. No more sunny slopes and reaching

vistas; no more purple and blue and gold; nothing but huge, indistinct masses, suffused with a dreary monotone of greyish red.

The plains on the west looked arid and obscure. They were desolate enough to the eye at the best of times, but the vast stretch now appeared inexpressibly sombre; and the long waves of soil, and the scanty shrubs which crested them, were all tinged alike with the pervading muddy hue.

"Nahum thinks there must be an awful sight of 'em," half whispered Seth Armstrong to Gifford, as they stood on the small eminence which overlooked their line of defence. His grizzled face was lined with anxiety, and his voice came a little thick as he spoke.

"Few or many, we must fight them," replied Hugh with a white light in his eye, which always came there in moments of resolution. "We've done all that men can do in the way of preparation, and we must look to our own right arms—and GOD'S help—for the rest."

"HIS will be done," said Seth solemnly. "I would ha' liked to git across in peace, but if so be that we must fight for't, why fight let it be."

"They don't seem to vally us no more'n so many beavers," observed Nahum Pelter, sauntering up to the group on the hillock. The man was chewing more rapidly than usual, but this was the only mark he showed of sharing any uncommon interest. "I

shouldn't wonder if there was a hundred of the red devils."

"Pray Heaven not," exclaimed the Doctor fervently, "or we've had our last supper."

"Time enough to cry when we're hurt. Ten good men, with plenty o' grit and a little luck, have whipped a hundred red skins afore now. Shoot low, shoot steady, never throw away a shot, and allers have some loads in reserve; them's the pints we want to look to."

"And so we will," cried Luke cheerfully. "Who knows? If the Indians get a sharp repulse at the beginnin' of a fight, I've heard they'll often give it up and leave. Let's hope it 'll be so now."

"They ain't like to quit," said Dick Railes, "onless they think that by hangin' on, others may come up and take a hand, and so add to the chances agin 'em. They know darned well how onlikely it is for us to git help while the scrimmage's goin' on."

"You forget the Delawares," remarked Gifford.

"There's the pint. Accordin' to what the chief said to you, he didn't think the Pawnees would be here for a 'hull day; and look at 'em! Now, if his men don't come up soon, it looks to me as though we'd hev' to fight without 'em."

"Depend upon it he knows the danger, and will strain every nerve to forestall it. But look! They will give us little time, I fear!"

All eyes were turned in the direction indicated,

and, as speedily, saw how grave was the cause for the speaker's apprehension. A large body of Indians appeared on horseback in their rear, and were slowly winding down the defile taken by their own train in descending the foot hills. They made no attempt at concealment, and rode in irregular order, as if perfectly at ease, and confident of carrying out their designs. At the distance, nothing more could be discerned than that they were about twenty-five in number, and that although some carried fire-arms, the majority seemed only provided with lances and bows and arrows.

A feeling of relief came over the hearts and faces of the white men, as each thus descried, and drew his conclusions from these details of the approaching array.

"Come," said Seth, drawing a long breath, "come! If these be all we've got to handle, we mayn't have sech a bad look out as we thought for."

Nahum Pelter shook his head. "There never was Injun yet who showed his hand like that without hidin' somethin' he didn't show. They've jist divided their gang, that's what it is, and they're goin' to close us in all round, same as they do the buffalo!"

An exclamation burst from the Doctor as Pelter finished, which drew attention from the east to the west.

"Look! look there!"

Far away on the plain there appeared a knot of horsemen seemingly on the verge of the horizon. There might have been six or eight of them, and so far there was no great occasion for alarm; but presently others were seen to the right and left, as if they were beating the plain for game. In another moment still more became visible on the outskirts of the others; and now there was no part of the semi-circle behind the line of the waggons but was dotted with dark threatening figures. All were mounted, and all were converging as to a common centre, straight down upon the little camp.

"There are seventy of 'em if there's one," said the Doctor, with a groan.

"To your posts, men!" shouted Seth, hoarsely, "we've no time to waste!"

The dispositions which had been agreed upon required some modification, owing to the probably complicated nature of the expected attack. It had been thought that a very small portion of the scanty force would suffice to hold the Ford, and it had been determined to place the men likely to be most efficient along the front line, where they would have ample cover, and could use their rifles to the best advantage. This arrangement was so far hastily altered as to put Nahum Pelter in charge at that now critical point with three others, including poor Ike and his constant companion. It was thought, and justly, that the dog, sagacious and amenable as he

was, might do good service in the event of a rush being made by the enemy in numbers at the crossing. This little band was provided with double sets of rifles, besides revolvers and long knives; and Nahum had, in addition, a large ducking gun, which, to use his own expression, he had "rammed full of slugs" for close quarters.

On the left of the front, Dick Railes was placed in charge, supported by the Doctor and two others, Luke holding the centre, and Seth himself, with Hugh Gifford, being stationed at the castle. The party was thus detailed over a line of some forty yards in length, the river covering their rear with tolerable efficacy, save at the weak point so well guarded by Pelter.

It was fortunate for the little band that the ground on the opposite bank of the stream was low and flat for a long distance toward the hills; and that it swelled upwards on their own side, forming a knoll in about the centre of the camp, depressing again as it ran to the line of waggons. The result of these accidents was that no raking fire upon the men holding the main line could be opened in the rear from the opposite bank; while it enabled them to gain time by reconnoitreing, and, if need be, opposing an approach in that direction, from behind the friendly shelter of the ridge, without entirely drawing off their attention from enemies in front. The position was certainly a very strong one; whether it were

sufficiently so, to enable the garrison to hold it against vastly superior numbers, remained to be seen. The Indians on the plain had now approached to within a distance of about four hundred yards, while those descending the defile had apparently come to a halt, since their column had for several minutes remained without emerging from one of its turnings which concealed it from view. Those on the plain now dismounted, and it could be seen that their dress was somewhat similar to that of the chief of the Delawares. They were, however, of inferior height and presence, and their countenances were hideously daubed with paint. Most of this party bore short rifles, as well as knives and tomahawks carried in their belts, while the rest, in addition to the latter weapons, had formidable-looking spears.

One of the party now advanced a few yards before the others, and, with amicable gestures, unrolled the long skin which he had carried at his back, and performed the manœuvre employed by Washashaco, as an indication of friendly intentions. Upon this demonstration, although having small hopes of its sincerity, Seth and Gifford ascended the knoll and made friendly gestures in response, which were in turn reciprocated by the savage. At this point of the proceedings the Indians slowly and cautiously drew somewhat nearer, and their leader made signs, proposing that his party should enter their camp, and pay the white men a visit. To this the latter signified a

courteous refusal, which was not altogether well received. The Indians soon commenced a violent discussion among themselves, which terminated in their chief, with some difficulty, intimating to the whites that his band had missed one of their number, whom they supposed to be in the traveller's camp, and that unless he were given up they intended to come and search for him. To this Seth and Gifford could only reply that the missing man was not there, and again decline the proffered visit. The warrior then suggested, by way of satisfying his braves, that the white men should all come and show themselves on the eminence where their spokesman stood, and thus prove to the Indians that their lost comrade was not among them. This transparent artifice poor Seth, in his earnest desire to avert a collision, failed to see through, and he called to the others to join him on the ridge, which most of them were in the act of doing, when the bass shout of Nahum Pelter was heard behind:—

"Be ye all mad? Do ye all want to git shot down in a bunch like wild pigeons? Down! Down! every man, while he can!"

The warning did not come too soon; for, whether fearful their trick would be understood, or, from some other reason that they might get no other opportunity, the savages paused no longer. The sharp crack of a dozen rifles was heard, and although they did small damage beyond a flesh wound in the thigh

for Jabez Fitch and the perforation of Seth's fur cap, they were well meant enough to clear the knoll in a trice, and drive the whites to their post, intent on sharp hostilities. At the same instant, the report of Pelter's rifle rang through the air, followed in quick succession by three other shots. The whole front line now opened on their assailants in a volley, and the Indians with demoniac shouts rushed forward to the assault.

Keeping up a running fire as they advanced, the enemy reached a point within twenty yards of the waggons with a loss of only two or three of their number, but at this critical moment the garrison delivered their reserved fire with deadly effect, nearly as many savages falling as there had been shots. The advance wavered, and finally retreated in confusion, bearing off their fallen companions.

An exulting cheer went up from the little band as they swiftly re-loaded their weapons and exchanged congratulations. None were hurt at this first onset, and they accepted the immunity as a happy augury.

"Well done, boys!" cried Pelter, his huge form appearing on the ridge from the Ford. "We've peppered three on 'em, sartain, down on our side, and they durs'n't take to the water! Keep on as well as you're doin', and we'll beat 'em off yet."

"No one is hurt?" asked Mary Anne, looking anxiously from the waggon.

"None, thank Heaven," replied Hugh; "but pray

do not show yourself thus; you will attract their attention, and draw their fire on the castle."

"We have four guns," said the girl, "and are ready to use them."

"Not yet, not yet; things are not so desperate yet as to make it needful or wise for you to expose yourselves. Pray retire."

Even as he spoke a bullet struck the top of the waggon, and, tearing away a shred of canvas in its course, sped on across the river. A cry burst from Luke, who saw the incident from his post.

"Back! back!" he shouted, "and lie down in the waggon! There's men enough left to be killed without women helpin' 'em. See! the red devils are comin' on again! Make her go in, Mr. Gifford, do!"

"I will go in," said the girl, steadily, but very pale. "I will go in, but only because I can do as much within as without." Indeed, she and Kitty had cut slits in the canvas on the side towards the enemy, and now prepared to swell the next volley as the foe came on, by pointing through these apertures the arms they possessed.

Small time was given for preparation, for the Indians were rushing forward with as much show of resolution as before. This time they advanced in much looser order, spreading themselves further apart than at first, and leaping and whooping to distract the aim of the whites. The latter, however, prudently withheld their fire until the enemy was even

nearer than at first, and then poured in a double volley with much more destructive effect. Again the assailants retreated, and again were congratulations exchanged.

But matters were looking graver at the Ford. Despite the cover of the group of cottonwoods, one of Nahum Pelter's handful had been hit, and although the wound was not fatal, it was serious enough to keep the sufferer from being of further use in the fray. He was carried back to a safe place by Ike, and the Doctor summoned in haste to his assistance. Thus the defence was at once weakened by two rifles, a fact of which the red men were speedily aware.

They did not attempt for the present a third general advance, but contented themselves by keeping up a heavy, though desultory fire, hoping by chance to disable others, and make the remainder an easy prey when they should resolve on a final charge. This policy the white men met in turn, by keeping securely behind their cover and wasting no ammunition in reply. An hour thus wore on, the little band lying grim and resolute on their arms, the Indians actively circling about them striving to spy out some vulnerable spot, or to catch a chance at some exposed one of their otherwise invisible foes. Tired at last of these unproductive tactics, a new manœuvre was resolved upon, and to their other dangers the beleaguered band were now threatened with those of fire.

A shower of burning arrows were thrown among the brush which has been described as forming an *abattis*, and connecting the waggons while it masked the movements of those behind. Should this be consumed, not only would they be deprived of their best cover, but openings would be made whereby the enemy might make their way into the camp. The water which had been prudently made ready to meet this emergency was now used with good effect; but those who used it were necessarily more exposed than before to the fire of the Indians, and the man Fitch, who had been slightly hurt earlier in the day, now fell mortally wounded by a bullet through the body.

At this heavy cost the flames were extinguished, but it was clear that the assailants could repeat their incendiary efforts whenever they chose; and even should they be defeated at a similar expense on each occasion, it was easy to reckon the small space that lay between the devoted party and extermination.

The Indians were apparently satisfied with this prospect, and willing to rest awhile from their labours. Their fire slackened, they no longer threw burning arrows, and the white men thus found time for hasty consultation. It was long past noon now, and the hope which had buoyed many of their hearts during the unequal strife had begun to fail them.

"Where," asked Seth, drawing a powder-blackened hand across his brow, which looked ten years older

since yesterday, "where, think ye, are the Delawares?"

Hugh shook his head without reply. He was, indeed, miserably disappointed; for, irrespective of the pressing need of his services and those of his warriors, the young man had placed implicit faith in Washashaco; and he grieved as much as a man could grieve, surrounded by so much that was exciting and engrossing, over the chief's defection.

Pelter crept over to say a word, but it was not now a word of encouragement; and Luke came over and grasped his father's horny hand with a sad look at the waggon, more expressive than words; the Doctor came, too, with set teeth and a bandage about his head. They had lost four out of their scanty number, besides one or two with slight wounds. All saw what none cared in words to express; that there was nothing before them but to die like men.

On came the Indians once again, and again the now desperate band rushed to their posts for a last struggle. Again the blazing missiles were hurled into the brush, and the flames this time mounted higher than before. Again were desperate efforts made to extinguish them; but the fire had more heart this time, and so had the assailants. With yells and screeches and appalling whoops, they swarmed on, not heeding now those who dropped among their number. The last shot of the whites was expended, and still their foes swept on. The blaze now caught

one of the waggons, and at this place a gap had been made larger than any other. Through this gap poured the exulting savages, but the two first fell by the rifles of Pelter and Ike, who sprang up the ridge to help beat back the assault.

At this terrible moment Seth Armstrong was hit by a chance bullet, and his right arm fell powerless by his side; but, nothing daunted, he seized an axe, and stood bareheaded, with his grey hair streaming in the wind, in front of the waggon where the females were, prepared to defend it to the last. But Hugh Gifford sprang toward the breach as if, though but for a moment, to contest its passage. As he did so a terrific war-whoop sounded from the Ford:—

"Hurrah!" shouted Nahum Pelter, as he bounded down from the slope, "hurrah! 'Tis the war-cry of the Delawares! Stand firm, boys! We'll lick 'em yet."

As he spoke the giant threw himself headlong into the gap whirling his long rifle, and dashing the Indians right and left to the earth at every whirl. It really seemed that he could hold the pass single-handed against the surging mass who opposed him. For three minutes, in truth, he did so; and those three minutes doubtless saved the lives of the rest of the party, but they cost the gallant frontiersman his own; for he fell at last like some noble tree, surrounded by the dead and wounded of his foes.

During this struggle Ike had pressed bravely

forward to the aid of his comrade, but, before the latter had fallen, the poor simpleton was struck in the breast by a tomahawk hurled by a savage who had managed to pierce the line below the larger breach. As he fell, the dog Lion sprang with a fierce howl at the throat of his assailant, and bore him also to the earth; but a second red man was close at the heels of the first, and he raised his hatchet to brain the noble beast from behind. Whether incited by the imploring look in Ike's eyes as he lay on the ground or not, Gifford was fortunately in time to anticipate this stroke; and, clubbing his rifle, he dealt the Indian a blow on the temple, which stretched him lifeless by Ike's side.

Having succeeded in overwhelming their huge opponent, the Pawnees now leaped in numbers over his body into the camp, but they met other and fresher foes than they counted upon; for Washashaco with his braves had crossed the stream above the Ford, and now rushed down the hill, uttering the terrible war-whoop of the Delawares. This onset, so sudden, so unexpected as it was, appeared to fill the Pawnees with terror. Six or eight were shot down at once, almost without lifting a hand, and the next instant the Delawares were upon and among them, striking and destroying without mercy.

The females now handed freshly-loaded weapons to their friends, and a volley from Luke, Dick

Railes, and the Doctor, discharged into the crowd on the plain outside, completed the discomfiture of the attacking party. They fled in all directions, leaving their dead and wounded to the mercy of the conquerors, while they sought to reach their horses on the open beyond. The yells and shots of their pursuers, however, produced a stampede among the horses, and doubled the confusion of the rout. The Delawares followed up their advantage relentlessly, and, in half an hour, of the numbers who commenced the attack, scarcely a tithe were living and unhurt.

Washashaco returning from the pursuit found his friends mourning over their dead. He paused by the body of Nahum Pelter.

"He was a great warrior," said the chieftain, solemnly, "and died as a warrior should. My brothers can now go forward in safety," he continued, pointing to the plain, where the last of the broken enemy could be seen flying before the victorious Delawares. "My brothers can go on their journey in peace; there are now no red men to stop their path from this place to the Great Lake of Bitter Waters!"

END OF THE FIRST BOOK.

Book the Second.

CHAPTER I.

The time has arrived when some brief explanation may be fitting, both as regards what has already been given of this narrative and what may hereafter be related. There is a piece of information which, although it may not be strictly due to the reader, is yet likely to be in some degree satisfactory, as clearing up doubts and solving the manner of treating the characters of certain individuals of our story, which otherwise might appear to be needlessly clouded and incomplete. When the author first determined on his work, his design was to set forth with tracing the adventures of its principal personages from the time when he first encountered and knew them in the wilds of California; but he afterwards thought such a narrative would be better rounded and more interesting if the reader were made acquainted with the eventful journey across the Plains on which those characters first met, and whence the mutual influence of diverse natures

might be supposed to have begun. Thus it fell out, then, that what he has called the First Book was taken down chiefly from the lips of Hugh Gifford, a circumstance which will explain the absence of any particular elaboration touching that gentleman's own peculiarities; and also, perhaps, account for some indications of reticence in describing the motives or thoughts of others. So far as these omissions are concerned, they might possibly have been fatal to the intelligibility of his story, had not the author been enabled to elicit from feminine sources such links and fragments as connected the gaps, and enabled him to construct a tolerably comprehensive whole. Human beings are rarely good judges of their own moral or æsthetic development, but those among them who are the best are seldom apt to be free in imparting its history. Hugh was more like William the Silent than Michel de Montaigne, and although he would readily tell you what he had done or even at times what he meant to do, he was grudging as to what he had thought and felt. But Marian—well, we shall see and judge her for ourselves, for it was many weeks that we lived within sight of her almost ideal beauty, within sound of her musical voice—in the same family, indeed, all of us digging and straining for yellow earth, in the lovely country that nestled about Armstrong's Bar.

Beautiful land of California! Beautiful in thy soaring mountains, beautiful in thy laughing plains,

in thy lakes and valleys, thy brimming rivers and thy sublime cataracts! Noble and yet mysterious land—where with all the vastness and solitude of primeval wilds there were found long reaches of velvety turf, shaded by giant trees, and as free from underbrush as an English park; reaches where one could gallop for miles and miles, and yet see no sign of a living thing; where after some long and easy ascent, perchance, the trees grew thicker and the air grew darker, till of a sudden, bursting on the eye with a flood of light, there stretched below a landscape of such surpassing and cultivated loveliness that the gazer could scarce believe—such is the force of prejudice and association—that it had not been for ages the abode of man—smoothed, softened, and redeemed from natural savagery by works of art and of agriculture. But as he gazed on he saw that it was not so. No line of smoke, no roof-tree, could his narrowest scrutiny detect in the spacious panorama before him. No broken column relieved with its sculptured whiteness the unvaried green of the foliage. No fragment of some springing dome intercepted the endless waves of the tree-tops. No cattle or sheep browsed over the boundless meadows so loaded with luxuriant vegetation, as if for their needs. No figures—more mournful deficiency than any other—no figures of human beings with crooks in hand and bits of bright colour about their dress to catch the eye with a comforting assurance that life

and sympathy were there! Nature alone—nature at once grand in her own majesty and made delicate and various by the constant suggestion of refined inhabitants, but of whom the closest eye could find no trace. It seemed as if capricious genii had swept by night through some Arcadian vale, rich in the labour of classic hands, stored with piles and piles of priceless architecture — temples, arches, fanes—and borne them, like Aladdin's palace, carefully away, leaving nature's work and nature's work alone behind.

Such was California—at least, such parts of it as I best knew. California which, with her delicious atmosphere, her sunny skies, her teeming fertility, has tangible attractions besides those of all her pomp of scenery and her feverish glare of gold, to draw earth's discontented wanderers to her soil, and, if they be wise, to keep them there. For me there is no need to call up associations connected with discoveries of the precious ore, to think of California as essentially a land of romance. The air alone—so different from that of the harsh, easterly exposures of the Atlantic coast—makes the pulse quicken even in memory, and the heart to beat with retrospective gratitude for its inspiriting beneficence. Where the body is healed and comforted the spirit is likewise apt to be, and the recollection of life is most prosaic which is passed in ungenial climes. Physical discomfort—the constant struggle against unfavourable

external conditions—is a sad drawback on poetic memories as well as poetic feeling, and although the Norsemen had bards as well as the Greeks, there is not much difference of opinion as to the relative inspiration of their muse. The misery which is taught in song may come of the east wind, but its love and its melody, its perfume and its hope, must be inspired by the balmy wreath of the south and the west. Yes, California was to me a land of romance; and not less so that I met there for the first time those friends of ours with whom the reader is already somewhat acquainted.

It was a soft evening in the spring of 1851 that, having wandered in many directions with many objects, chance or fate drew me near the spot where these friends had made their camp and set up their tents. All the afternoon I had been walking, trotting, or cantering my horse through such park-like glades as I have essayed to describe. The last stopping-place had been twenty miles behind, but the day was fine, and the track not difficult to follow, since one had merely to keep within easy distance of a stream which flowed on the left, and on whose banks the settlement, which was the goal of my journey, was to be found. There had been, however, an abrupt rise in the rolling country, and for some miles the tall trees always ascending before, told me I was gaining a considerable elevation. This led me to swerve more to the right, to keep

clear of the river, whose banks must now be high and precipitous, and, thus inclining, the forest grew denser, until the tall red-woods seemed almost disposed to dispute my further passage. It was getting towards evening too, and although hostile Indians were said to be few in that region, yet an occasional grizzly was stumbled upon, and was pretty certain to prove a very dangerous customer. Just as this disagreeable thought flashed across my mind, the deep bay of a dog rang forth in the thicket beyond, and put to flight all fear of any such terrible neighbour; for it was not the bark of an Indian's cur, or the dismal whine of the *coyote*, and I knew at once that white men must be near. A few moments longer, and my conviction was verified, although the faces I saw would scarcely have passed for Caucasian in an Atlantic city. There were two of them bronzed to more than a mahogany colour, and, at the first glance, neither in expression nor manner did the strangers seem very prepossessing. They were seated on a log in a small, natural clearing, and a mountain brook was babbling along beside them; two men in leathern hunting-shirts and leggings of what appeared to be of the same material. The elder had little else in the way of dress or trappings save a broad knife stuck in his girdle; he had a white line scored across one cheek, as I afterwards learned, by a rifle bullet. The younger man was more curiously arrayed, for his dress was

plentifully bedecked with gaily coloured feathers and beads, interspersed here and there by pieces of bright scarlet cloth. The two had a tin ewer or pan on the log between them, which they were shaking back and forth, watching it the while with eager interest.

"Down, Lion, down!" cried one of the men just before my horse emerged into the open. "There ain't no Injuns near abouts, I tell ye, and as to the bars, they're a gettin' too all-fired smart to travel so close to the settlement. Down I tell ye!"

"Lion knows more nor you or me, Dick Railes," exclaimed his companion. "If he says red skin, it's red skin. If he says bar, it's bar. He don't say neither bar nor red skin now, though, seein' he knows it's a white man!"

As he spoke, the dog burst into the area, baying furiously, for the intruder was close at hand. My horse was a trifle restive under this ungracious welcome, and I hastened to establish more friendly relations.

"It *is* a white man, my friends," I cried, "and one who means no one harm; so, perhaps, you'll call off this trusty sentinel of yours, whom my horse seems to think a grizzly in disguise."

But Lion barked no longer. The sound of my voice, and the fact that his companions knew of my presence, were quite sufficient for the sagacious creature, who now laid down close to the log in

silence, only questioning my every movement with his bright penetrating eyes.

"More on 'em?" said the elder man in a discontented tone. "That's three since Sunday. Honey and bees is nuthin' to't. You air a stranger, you air, Sir. You're welcome sure enough so fur's hung beef and hoe-cake goes; and a shakedown for that matter. But there's poor diggins round here. That's so. Maybe," he continued, his face brightening with a look of sudden hope and reassurance, "Maybe, ye don't reckon to stay round here? Like as not, you're goin' on to Yankee Jim's, or Shirt-tail Cañon?"

I shook my head. "I was going to ask you to show me the way to Armstrong's Bar."

My interlocutor groaned. "You're sure ye hadn't rather keep on to Yankee Jim's? It's drefful poor pickin' hereabouts. Have a chaw, stranger?"

"Not now, thank you. Then you don't know the way to Armstrong's?"

"Know it? Why I know it backwards, and every inch fifteen miles up and down both sides of the river. Ye hain't heard how fast they're scratchin' out the coarse gold up at the Cañon, have ye?"

I explained that I did not come for the immediate purpose of digging, but to see the country; and that my object was to proceed at once to Armstrong's Bar. The first part of my statement seemed to afford my companion great relief and satisfaction.

"Don't mean to dig, eh? Well, it *is* hard work, and harder down our way than most anywhere's else. As for the Bar, I kin take ye there, and I will. Not that the boys like strangers pooty well. They're kinder sot agen 'em. There was an editor there last month from Marysville; a curus kind of a chap, but I guess he means well. His name was Zelotes Pangburn, it wor; and the boys treated him as slick as they knew how; but he turned agen 'em."

"Hooray!" shouted the other so suddenly that the dog leaped up with a quick bark of sympathy. "Hooray! here's the shiny arter all! Ike's found it—more'n there is anywhere on the Bar! Hooray!" and he held up in the palm of his hand a little heap of glittering dust.

"Shut up, can't ye?" growled Dick Railes; "ye'll have the 'hull of Californy on the Bar, with your boastin' and howlin'."

"And s'pose I did," cried Ike, "there's more'n enough for all on 'em! and when they're ain't, Ike 'll find more still—mountains of it."

"I tell ye what, Ike," proceeded his comrade, "s'pose you and Lion travel on ahead, and tell Miss Armstrong and Kitty this ere man's comin' on't the Bar; they'll want to scare up sumthin' for supper."

Ike was nothing loth to accede to this arrangement, and he set forth, as they assured me, by a short cut, which would bring him to the settlement much sooner than my horse would carry me. This

cut led toward the left and down the cliffs, Armstrong's Bar being directly on the banks of the stream, a couple of miles further on. Dick and myself proceeded by a more circuitous route, having to pass around the base of a series of lofty hills.

"He's only a poor nateral," observed Mr. Railes, in a deprecating tone, as he took in a gigantic slice of his favourite weed, "only a poor nateral. But the folks thinks a heap of him, and he kin fight like sin, he kin."

"Fight?"

"Fight. He and that there big dog o' his'n jest put four redskins through their dickies atween 'em, out there on the plains. That's so, I was along and seen it; and it wor the hardest day's fight I ever see. Most o' the boys on the Bar was in it, they wor; and there was more that never came out of it."

"You had a rough time of it?"

"Rough? you can bet high we had. 'Twas just touch and go whether any on us ever came out alive. I never think on't but I feel my scalp half off, and put up my hand to see if it's thar."

"And your friends at the Bar were in this struggle, you say?"

"Most all on 'em; old Seth, and Luke, and his wife and gals, and the Scotch doctor we've got there, and Hugh Gifford, and Ike, and Lion—you've seen them—and a heap more; let alone them we buried where they fell. There was a chap named Pelter, as

good a hunter and as true a shot as ever dropped a buck or hit a dollar. He saved the 'hull party, he did; for he stood like a rock, and blocked the hole where the Injuns was tryin' to pour in, till the Delawares came to help us."

"So that most of the party escaped?"

"Yes. Some on 'em hurt bad, though. Uncle Seth had his arm broke, and poor Ike was hit in the chest with a hatchet. It stunned him like, and the big dog had the redskin that hove it by the throat quicker 'n greased lightin'; but it wor all day with Lion, it wor, if it hadn't been for Gifford; for he jist cooked another devil who was arter splittin' the critter's head open. A minute more and the Delawares were among us. Painters and screech-owls! I can hear 'em a hollerin' now! Louder than thunder, and sharper than a steam-engine! But it wor the pootiest music we ever heerd for all that; for we knew it was friends, and it meant we were saved."

"And you; were you unhurt?"

"Not quite; I wor tickled up in the ribs some, and got this wipe across the cheek—nuthin' to speak of. So you see, stranger," continued Mr. Railes, spirting a parenthetical oblation far ahead; "so you see, arter goin' through sech lively old times in company, the folks up at the Bar kind o' froze together; and though they hadn't thought of it afore, only meanin' to hitch hosses to cross the plains, they agreed to try and stick to the same

diggins, and run with the same machine as long as they could. That's why I'm down on Zelotes Pangburn."

"He interfered with this association, then?"

"Not that you'd say he exactly interfered. But he went and stuck a lot of stuff in his paper, down to Marysville, 'bout what fat diggins and slick folks there was up to Armstrong's Bar, and how complete and pooty it was, and this set others a chatterin' down at Frisco and other places, and we've just been bothered with strangers ever since."

"Well, you understand I don't come to dig or to give trouble, and——"

"Oh, no offence; I was only explainin' to ye, ye know, 'bout Zel.; we're all glad to see folks who don't come to make trouble interferin' with claims. Arter all, we don't do much more'n make a good livin'; for grub, and boots, and tools is so all-fired high, anyhow, and teamin' makes 'em come so much higher, it don't leave much room to dicker on; but we're happy and comfortable together, and, if we was let alone, there ain't none of the party 'd vote for a change."

It was nearly dusk now, and as my tired horse stepped slowly along, Dick Railes walked by my side, beguiling the way with his rambling accounts of the people at Armstrong's Bar, their likes and dislikes, their adventures on the plains after the encounter with the savages,—which adventures were,

as usual after any highly perilous and exciting one, dull and commonplace in comparison—the exploits of Lion, and the eccentricities of his master, the troubles the party had overcome in getting cover over their heads when they first came on the Bar, and so forth; until, when the stars began to wink through the thickening obscure, and we wound slowly down the hill side into the little settlement, I knew nearly as much of its habits and its history as my informant himself.

It was a charming spot, whose beauties not even the deepening shadows could altogether conceal. The washings were at some little distance in a bend of the stream, and hidden by intervening slopes; so that there was none of that hideous tearing up of the earth—that rifting and scoring of nature's bosom, which afterwards gave such vast tracts in California so ghastly an appearance; the appearance of a place which has been subjected to a terrific bombardment; where descending shells have sunk into the soil, and, bursting, thrown it in all manner of confused heaps and shapeless clods around; where cannon-balls, flying at a tangent to the surface, have struck inequalities and laid open huge furrows of many yards in length; where the ground has been turned up from so great a depth that the mould which alone can bear green things is covered over and buried by yellow, sun-burned masses of clay and piles of sterile gravel; where man, having accomplished all the

desolation possible, has fled and left the place a solitude. There are three things, indeed, in whose pursuit our race makes similar sacrilegious assaults —leave similar scars upon mother Earth—three passions whose traces may be easily confounded, those for war, travel, and gold. Entrenchments and rifle-pits for defence and attack, excavations and embankments for lines of railway, and tearing up the soil for the coveted metal, produce appearances which may be readily mistaken one for the other. But there was no sign of any such violence to be seen as yet at Armstrong's Bar.

They came there for gold it is true, and if it were to be had they would have it. Those who thought when first leaving the east that they would till the soil, embark in trade, mend bodies, cure souls or what not, fell to pure gold getting at last in its simplest form when they came on the ground. But their toils were happily pursued out of sight of their dwellings, and—rare blessing in the earlier Californian days—women's hands were with them to beautify as well as women's eyes to keep holy. So that there were no outward marks of plutocracy about the little nest of homes. It was a very odd-looking nest certainly; something like a cross, perhaps, between a straggling Yankee village and a Bedouin encampment; the two or three edifices, half tent and half shanty; but the turf was green and virgin all around, the neighbourhood was scrupulously clean, and there was a

dear, sweet odour of climbing vines in the air, which seemed to sanctify the place like incense, because it reminded one of home. There was at least no sign of gold digging about the place, and that of itself was an attraction.

These were advantages dimly seen and imperfectly appreciated, it is true, on the evening when I came to Armstrong's Bar; but I learned to know and cherish them afterwards, and so describe them rather from later than earlier impressions. My welcome was a cordial one however; more so than I had any right to expect. But Dick Railes, propitiated no doubt by my evident interest in his narrative, and by the more material incident of my not coming to prospect for gold, evidently did his best to launch me comfortably into the good opinion of the tiny society; and although, as usual, those whom I subsequently came to know best were at first most distant, I had passed many an evening less agreeably than my first proved to be at Armstrong's Bar.

Seth Armstrong had managed to erect a highly respectable domicile, all things considered. There were probably no such things as clap-boards, or planking, or shingles, within many a mile, and a saw-mill was yet unheard of in that region. But the frame of the building was of stout redwood, with the bark still covering the trees and saplings which served as timbers and joists, and the roof of heavy canvas was steep enough to give fair promise of dry

shelter below. A chimney had been managed of *adobe;* the sun-burnt brick used by the Mexicans, half-breeds, native Californians, or whatever else, or more properly the singular population could be called, which the Anglo-Saxons found in languid possession when they came to occupy the new appanage of the great republic. There was, therefore, a very comfortable fire-place, and a bright blaze on the hearth not unwelcome to see, for the night was growing chilly. The house was of one story only, but there was a ceiling of canvas some ten feet from the ground, besides the cover afforded by the roof proper, and there were two windows with real sashes and glass, opposite the door. The space within, which measured some forty by twenty feet, was divided into four rooms; the larger being in the centre, and forming the main apartment, while one end was partitioned off apparently for the females of the family, and the other for the men. Each of these had serviceable doors leading into the central hall, which latter was well provided with settles, tables, dressers, and such necessaries as were requisite to comfort, albeit it was idle to make any pretensions to elegance. From the middle of the ceiling, and about three feet below it, hung a hoop to which were attached several bits of lighted candle, and which constituted a chandelier of a primitive shape and style, indeed, but having its own advantages of convenience as well as of safety; which, in an establishment so largely constructed of

cotton, was not to be despised. Several barrels stood in the corners, and along the walls were hung from the wood forming the frame of the house various hams, and other articles of provender, of a dried and generally imperishable character. On one side there were also secured a rough set of shelves, on the lower of which were arrayed a few dishes and metallic utensils for cooking, and on the upper about a dozen well-worn volumes. Floor to this unique saloon there was none, except of beaten clay, which, indeed, was nearly as hardened with much use as if it had been laid in the *adobe* itself.

With all its homeliness there was an air of neatness in the room. There were curtains of simple calico to the windows, and on the little seats in front of them were bunches of wild flowers. Then, again, the floor, if only of clay, was free from litter, and the tables and dressers were as clean as hands could make them. Over the mantelpiece appeared a species of rude trophy, with a couple of rifles and a fowling-piece crossed, a bowie knife, with a pair of pistols and a belt, pouch, and powder-flask; the whole crowned with a stag's horns, which made a picturesque apex to the mass. Underneath the arms were two or three pairs of spurs, on either side of an old-fashioned mirror; a piece of furniture rather long for its width, and being one of the very few of her household treasures which poor Mrs. Armstrong had been able to bring in safety across the plains.

The roof of the edifice projected some ten feet beyond its façade, forming a kind of piazza, useful for shade and shelter, and it was here that I was deserted by my guide, after I had complied with his suggestion to dismount.

"I'll jist take off the saddle, and put the critter in the *corral*," observed Mr. Railes, "while you walk in and see the folks. 'Taint supper-time yet, but the gals 'll be on hand, and glad to see ye."

The speaker was gone before I could remonstrate, and I felt somewhat embarrassed about thrusting myself thus unintroduced and unasked into a house which, although humble enough, was evidently not an hostelry, and whose accommodation must clearly be of a limited description. I, therefore, paused in a momentary perplexity, which was relieved by the opening of the door. A flicker of red light from within fell on a face and figure which I had no difficulty in recognizing as those of the "pooty gal who lived with the Armstrongs," who had been mentioned as we came by my communicative companion.

"You are the gentleman Ike and Lion saw on the road?" asked a full, soft contralto. "You are very welcome. Mr. Armstrong is up at the Bend, but will soon be at home for the night. Pray walk in."

Which I did, nothing loth. I see her now, with her lithe yet rounded figure, and her plain stuff gown; her brow so low and sweet, and the wonderful

long lashes, which swept over eyes more wonderful still; her straight Greek profile, her wealth of massive black hair, her radiant teeth, her almost babyish mouth. I could go into rhapsodies now after all these years, and after Marian Rooke has become —but we must not anticipate—neither must we, for I hate double-dealing of every kind; neither must we mislead the reader regarding the relater's connection with the more important matters of this history. Therefore, let this opportunity be embraced to explain that, although there exist reasons why he should here and there verify them by referring to his personal knowledge and experience, his individuality has little concern with them otherwise, and will not be obtruded more than may be strictly conducive to clearness and authenticity.

Two other women were in the room,—Mrs. Armstrong, who greeted the stranger with homely kindness, and pretty Kitty, who received him with shy cordiality. Presently the door opened again, and my *avant couriers* were added to the assemblage. The dog walked straight up to my side, and looked steadily in my face with an expression of deliberate inquiry; and on my responding with some customary indications of amity, he gave three slow and ponderous wags of his tail, and went and dropped heavily in a corner.

"He never forgits any one he's seed afore," remarked Ike, gravely, "nor he couldn't if he tried.

He knows all them as lives on the Bar, and all them as ever came to it, and all them as he don't know ain't wuth knowin'."

No one venturing to combat this proposition, its enunciator seated himself near his dog, and commenced a process of an ornamental character, intended to enrich some portion of his costume.

"He's allers quiet and good-tempered," said the old lady, in an undertone, "'cept when he talks about the plaguy gold, and *then* he only wants to talk a bit too much. He used to be wuss than he is, but I think it made him kind o' brighter, havin' the dreadful time with the Injuns on the plains. Ike fit, and fit well, but he got hurt bad, and was some time gittin' over it."

"You seem to have had a narrow escape."

"If there was ere a time the LORD visibly interfered," answered Mrs. Armstrong, piously, "it was on that day. Our folks did their best, but they was well nigh spent, and we women did our best—not that *I* should have had strength to do anything if it hadn't been for the pluck of that ere young lady, Mary Ann there, who's got more grit than any gal I ever see in all my born days, and kept Kitty and me up a cheerin' us, and settin' us the example of loadin' and firin' just as reglar's if she'd been a sodger."

"The gentleman will think me quite an Amazon," said the young lady referred to, laughing.

"So ye are, I reckon. You amazed me enough,

and the Injuns enough, and more too, that time I'm thinkin'. But 'twould all have been no use if it hadn't been for that chief I hated the sight of afore, and thought no better than a murderer! Jest showin' how folks takes themselves in in this world, and how slow we oughter be a sittin' in judgment on our fellow critters."

"You know, ma," said Kitty Armstrong, coming into the light with her golden hair, and bright, bashful face, "you know, ma, that Mr. Gifford said all the time that the chief would be true to us, and felt sure he'd git us out of trouble at last."

"I know, I know. But then you see the frontier boys thought Mr. Gifford knew too much 'bout books to knows much 'bout Injuns; and they was afeard he wouldn't like to fight much hisself when the time came, so that kind o' shook and wavered me in puttin' much trust in his idees."

"And he did fight arter all!"

"Like a lion! and saved that poor critter's life in the corner inter the bargain. Folks learn a good deal they never expect to when they come to cross the plains."

The huge dog here rose and stalked majestically to the door, where, turning his head on one side, he listened for a time with profound attention; after which, apparently satisfied, he slowly marched back, and resumed his position in the corner. Kitty answered my inquiring look.

"He heard us mention Mr. Gifford's name, and I s'pose that reminded him 'twas about time for him and the rest to be in to supper. He always knows when it's time for 'em to come in."

"He knows everythink, he does," asserted Ike, with energy. "The time to eat, and the time to drink, when to git up, and when to lie down. He knows things that pison, and he'll warn ye on 'em if you watch him. He knows friends from foes sooner than any man does, and none on 'em can pull the wool over his eyes. He'd tell ye where all the gold is, only he thinks 'twould be bad for ye to grow too rich all of a suddint; don't ye, Lion?"

The dog looked gravely at his master, and gave three thumps on the floor with his great tail.

"Ye see he knows every word ye say to him. What's more, he knows what ye say to each other, only he don't kear much 'bout your'e noticin' it, for fear 'twould make ye cautious, and he likes to keep posted in all that's goin' on. Don't ye, Lion?"

Lion gave the same response as before, but he no longer awaited further questioning, but rose promptly, and again went to the door and listened; and this time his *reconnaissance* was more satisfactory, for he quickly leaped up and opened the door with the greatest ease, pushing up the latch with his paw, and giving a bark of welcome. Immediately after, four men entered the little cabin.

CHAPTER II.

"HERE we are, mother," cried Seth Armstrong, cheerily. "Here we are, richer by five eagles than we was in the mornin'. 'Taint much, to be sure, with flour at fifty dollars a barrel, and salt pork a dollar a pound, and boots at two ounces! But it's gittin' on, and keepin' our heads above water, which is more than many poor critters are doin' jist at present. Servant, sir, didn't see you afore; come to stay a night with us? That's right. We'll try and make you as comfortable as we kin, though the *coyotes* do haowl some, and the shake-down ain't jist like the Astor House. Kitty, I hope there's something to give the gentleman for supper."

"There's six of us men," remarked Luke, with a good-humoured essay at introduction, "six in all, by good rights, though Ike, there, allers reckons seven. That's the old man, and this is me, and this here's Dr. Landale; he's a Britisher, he is, but he's a good kind of a man for all that, and ain't stuck up none. And that man playin' with the dog, that's Hugh Gifford. As to mother and the gals, you've made acquaintance yourselves."

"Glad to know you, sir," quoth the Doctor, "only I hope you didn't come to the Bar on the recommendation of that busybody, Pangburn. He's sent so many with the idea that we were shovelling out gold by the ton as to cause some disappointment. We're just paying our way, that's all; with a good chance every day of striking a lead that may bring us to fortune."

"Fortune!" echoed a grave voice from the corner. "Not with one at such ill terms with the goddess as me, I fear."

"You! Nonsense!" said the Scotchman. "If she were resolved to make a dead set against you, you'd have left your bones among the Pawnees. You Americans are always so impatient. You must build a house, a ship, a reputation, a fortune in a day; you *do* sometimes, and what is the consequence? Your house totters at the push of a child, your ship goes to bits in the first gale, your reputations are bright and shining as soap bubbles, and as lasting, and your riches take wings and fly away before you learn how to spend them."

"Our'n won't," said Luke, as he seated himself at a table, and prepared to weigh the glittering dust, which he poured from a buckskin bag. "Leastways, not afore we git to divide more'n eight dollars and a half a day."

"I don't b'lieve in hasty got fortin' no more than you, Doctor," observed Seth, approvingly, "only I

don't know as 'Merikins are wuss than other folks in such things. If they're lively and spry, it's 'cause they're in a new country, and they hev' to keep even or go behind-hand. We air like a young colt, we air; when we git older we'll git stiddier."

"Three ounces and a half and an eighth," announced Luke from his scales. "Nigher to six eagles than to five, father."

"That's above the average—above the average. If we keep on, p'raps we'll ketch up to what Mr. Pangburn said we got, arter all."

"Why," I inquired, "did he overstate your profits?"

"Overstate? Well I reckon he did, some. He said that we was takin' out fifty dollars a day to the man, and that the wildest dreams of Golcondy and the Ind would soon be outstripped by the wealth of S. Armstrong."

"But what could be his object?"

"You see, sir," growled the Doctor, "he was just exerting one of the pet privileges of his countrymen. Once understand that, and they'll never deceive you. Swallow all things, but not forgetting the grains of salt. As a mountain is to a molehill so is fifty dollars to the answer. A very simple sum in proportion, and of universal application."

"You musn't let Doctor Landale excite your national prejudices, sir," uttered the sweet contralto I had first heard. "He has his privileges as well as

our poor countrymen, and we're all afraid to offend him. You know he keeps the key of the medicine chest, and can always punish those who vex him. Besides, if he abuses us to-day he will praise us to-morrow. Why 'twas only yesterday morning he was extolling the republic as warmly as the veriest Yankee in the land, and to a Yankee too."

"Miss Rooke omits to explain the animus," retorted the Doctor, "which was that my natural pugnacity was aroused by talk of an opposite character."

"Which means that you won't let Mr. Gifford criticise the faults of his countrymen, a practice to which you have put in a claim to a monopoly."

"It's a Briton's birthright to grumble," urged the Doctor, "as it is a Yankee's to brag; and it seems contrary to nature that either should seek, as Dick Railes would call it, to 'swap their privileges.'"

"I guess the Doctor's con*trary* enough," laughed Luke. "We all thought as much when he insisted on layin' out the street here and locatin' all the corner posts, science like, with his instruments, just 'cause Dick laughed at the th'odolite."

"And why shouldn't the Bar be properly laid out? This may be the site of a prosperous city. Here in a few years there may be thousands of people, huge squares, flourishing trade. This spot may become famous among the merchants of the earth, who shall flock hither with their silks and spices and precious stuffs, to exchange for the treasure and produce

yielded by the soil. Armstrong's Bar may be the centre of a powerful nation, the seat of a great dynasty, the home of learning, the cradle of genius, the temple of the arts. It may become a Tyre, a Carthage, a Venice——"

"Doctor, Doctor! Ain't that awful like Zel. Pangburn?"

"Well, perhaps. But the difference is, that I am only speculating on what may possibly be, while he is always lying about that which actually is."

"I'm thinkin' there's about as much romance in one as t'other," said the practical Luke. "There ain't depth of water here to allow much trade. To be sure, there's rails. But folks ain't goin' to settle much on rails alone when there's big rivers enough to have ships and rails too. I guess Sacramenty and Frisky 'll have to take the rag off the Bar; to say nuthin' of Stockton, and Beneshy, and Marysville."

"Who lives will see," said the Doctor, sententiously. "Meanwhile, let us have our supper."

The meal was soon smoking on the board; rustic enough, but wholesome, abundant, and clean. Moreover, to be served by such fair hands was a novelty in those days, and as such, would have given zest to a far inferior repast. The tea was hot and strong, the bacon tolerable, the bread well made, and although there were neither butter nor vegetables, we were used to those deficiencies in the mines. Every one talked, and bantered, and argued, but Hugh

Gifford; and truth impels the confession that that gentleman did not strike me on this occasion as the most agreeable member of the little circle. When he looked at me at all—which was not often—there was something like suspicion in his eyes; and when he spoke to me—which was less frequent still—it was with a distance almost amounting to *hauteur*. However, the ladies were affable, and the other men hospitable, so that I was put at my ease on the whole, in spite of Mr. Gifford's constraint; and the Doctor was disposed to make up for the lack of conversational powers, or of good humour exhibited by the New Englander.

"D'ye stay long hereabouts?" the former asked, as the meal drew near a conclusion.

"Ah—I don't quite know—haven't made up my mind; but would like to see as much of the country as I can; the scenery, I mean, and all that sort of thing."

I hesitated because I felt a little guilty. It was evident that the party were not anxious to be disturbed in their new home. Nor was there any certainty that they would or need be. When I first met Dick Railes I had seen that he, at least, was prejudiced against new comers, more especially of a gold-seeking character. There was no reason why I should enter into the explanation that I was there in a sort of half-engineer, half-lawyer capacity, with a view to determine the bounds and meets of an old

Spanish-Mexican grant, which, but for the discovery of the gold, might never have been heard of; but which I had good grounds to think extended over what was called Armstrong's Bar. There was no reason, I repeat, to prematurely volunteer such an explanation; but, as I answered the Doctor's question, I looked up and saw Hugh Gifford's calm, inquiring eyes fixed upon me in a manner which made me feel as if I had been guilty of a crime.

"There is lovely scenery to be found here, sir," responded the Doctor, in a more earnest tone than usual; "scenery which is different, indeed, from ours, but which sometimes makes me feel as I used to feel at home in Scotland. There is, it is true, no Bay of San Francisco hereabouts; no Yo-Semite cataract, no Monte Diabolo; little of the grandeur you find along the coast range, or in the great sweep of the Sierra Nevadas; but I can show you valleys as picturesque, lakes as secluded and peaceful, rivers as winding and pleasant-banked, and brooks as frolicsome as, I'll dare swear, you've ever seen elsewhere."

"You'll find the Doctor an enthusiast about nature, sir," said the contralto; "he finds something to like in the hills, and trees, and flowers of this new country, if not always in its newer inhabitants."

"The hills, and trees, and flowers are not Yankees," grumbled the Scotchman, "at least, not yet; when they bestow a few of the outlandish names on spots in this vicinity they're so prodigal of in those more

thickly settled, I dare say my admiration may cool. It's hard to keep up any enthusiasm about a Jackass Gulch, or to cherish any sweet imaginings about a Murderer's Bar. The place they call Dead Mule Cañon is said to be one of the most lovely ravines in California; and I can bear witness to the beauty of Wake-up Lake; but who can preserve abiding interest in spots degraded by such diabolical nomenclature? Why, the poor natives and half-breeds should put these rascals to the blush were there any shame in them, by the contrast between their own melodious and appropriate names, with the ruffianly substitutes of the new-comers."

I heartily coincided in the justice of the Doctor's stricture, but hinted that the solecisms he complained of were committed by the ignorant and thoughtless Western men, uneducated and little used to pick their expressions—the pioneers and vanguard of our civilization, who would be closely followed by others with more delicate ears and respecters of euphony, who would banish and replace by others more suitable the barbarous appellatives of their predecessors. But the Doctor demurred even to this reasonable probability; he doubted it—he knew what it was to give a dog a bad name—and he believed Jackass Gulch would be Jackass Gulch to the end of the chapter.

The evening passed with no greater jars than such mild controversies, and I found myself so much

absorbed, partly by the presence of the gentler sex, and partly by interest in people so different from most of those with whom I had lately been in contact, that a circumstance quite slipped from my memory, which otherwise might have gained for me a more assured welcome at the outset. It was only when Dick Railes brought in my saddle-bags, at a late hour, saying, he "s'posed I'd like to have 'em nigh me when I turned in," that the circumstance recurred to my mind. The postmaster of the settlement I had left in the morning had confided to my care a package of letters, apparently some twenty in number, for Armstrong's Bar—and they were to be given to Seth Armstrong. It was not unusual, in the absence of any regular postal arrangements, to avail in this manner of private carriage, and to intrust the delivery of the missives to the oldest or best known settler of the neighbourhood where they were addressed.

"A thousand pardons," I exclaimed, "for keeping back what some of you may be anxiously expecting; but you have made my evening so agreeable as to drive all other thoughts from my mind."

The package was promptly given to Seth, who, after reading the superscription with grave and evidently satisfied deliberation, broke the seals and counted over the letters:—"S. Armstrong, Mr. Seth Armstrong, Seth Armstrong, Esquire; that's me. Mrs. Colonel Seth Armstrong, postmarked Woods

County, Ohio; mother, that's you. Phineas Pitcher, care of Colonel Armstrong, Armstrong's Bar; Dan'el Spike, ditto; Eliphalet Pike, the same; Patrick Mike, ditto; Mr. Ebenezer Skinner (late of Biddeford, Maine), the same; these belongs to the boys down to the Bend. Elcanor Doolittle—that's wrong, that 'd oughter gone to Yankee Jim's. Señor Diego Y. Santiago de Alaméda, postmarked Mariposa; that's the greaser we hired to take kear of the critters, and who went off on Kitty's grey mustang; what's this—Massachusetts—per Golden City—San Francisco—Hugh Gifford, Esquire."

The young man held out his hand to receive his letter, and I saw a sombre shadow flit across his face as he did so. There was certainly none of the anxious yet pleased alacrity in his manner which people commonly exhibit on receiving letters, three thousand miles from home. He went to his corner, and his face grew no brighter as he looked at the handwriting on the missive; but the others were too much engrossed with their own or their friends' letters to notice his disquietude. Yet no; there were eyes besides mine fixed upon him. For as I turned away lest my gaze—as it had once or twice before to-night—should attract his attention, it fell upon the countenance of Marian Rooke. She was studying Hugh Gifford's. Her lips were slightly parted, and the colour was coming and going on her olive cheek as with one who watches for some critical contingency.

She sat opposite to him at some distance, and had in her lap some sort of woman's work; her hands had left it, and one, wandering up to her brow, had pushed back the mass of black hair, making the forehead look wider than before; while her elbow ested on a table by her side. I looked but for a moment or two, feeling some compunction at penetrating a mystery wherein I had no concern. But in those two moments were crowded, thus inadvertently, all manner of traces of what had gone before, all manner of prophecies of what was to come hereafter. I had already been told something of the common vicissitudes of these people — something of the history of their mere outer lives; I had suddenly gone beyond this, and had stepped within the portal of the history of their hearts.

CHAPTER III.

I SHALL make no further apology than has been already made or implied, for either extinguishing my personality when it becomes necessary that I should be, in a manner, a spiritual rather than a corporeal witness of the scenes which are to follow, or reappearing when such personality should be remembered in the few wherein I was a positive actor. The reader will be satisfied, I trust, with the assurance that my sources of information may be in all cases implicitly relied upon; and that in every instance when I was not absolutely present *in propriâ personâ*, I spared no pains to obtain both personal and circumstantial testimony as to what occurred. So far as my present agency was concerned, I was merely a *deus ex machina*, that is to say, a Mercury; to the extent of bringing letters to Armstrong's Bar, which paved the way to my becoming more intimate there afterwards: but I must overcome this absurd tendency to anticipate.

The scene which appeared so full of significance to the observer was one which could be but of rare occurrence. Mails were not frequent, and letters

for small and remote settlements were often long in reaching their destination in the early mining days. Not more than twice or thrice before had letters arrived for the dwellers on Armstrong's Bar. Not more than twice or thrice, then, could such a cause have risked the betrayal of a secret like that the observer saw, or thought he saw, on this occasion. Those who were most interested in such a secret—if it existed—spoke of the letter next morning in a way which might well make it appear imaginary.

It was early morning, and they were walking on the luxuriant virgin turf which carpeted the banks of the stream. A beautiful dewy morning, with spangles everywhere on the ground and no clouds in the sky, except some long, gorgeously-coloured strips, which latticed the rising sun. The gold-seekers were not yet at their daily toil, and Marian and Gifford often rose and walked thus early, before the others were even stirring.

"So you have had a letter?"

"Yes."

"From—Virginia?"

"From Virginia."

"She is well I hope?"

"She writes as if she were."

"And your friend, her brother, and the rest of the family?"

"Quite well, she says."

"She is anxious about you, of course?"

"She is anxious about my prospects."

"Prospects?"

"Yes; of making money to be sure."

"And is that all she is anxious about?"

"What else is there she should care for?"

"What else? Why, your health—your thoughts—the state of your mind—the books you have read, whether by nature or man—the people you have met—the views you have seen—your recollections of the dear days which have gone by—your hopes for the future. Should she care for none of these?"

"She has been taught—as I have—that all these things are subordinate to the chief one. If I have health or strength, luck or cunning, such as enable me to gain gold, the rest is as nothing."

"I think you must wrong her—a true woman cannot be so mercenary."

"No one was ever called a bigot among an assemblage of Roundheads. The talk of the people about her, their every aspiration, their thoughts when they lie down and when they get up, by their firesides, in the market, in the very house of prayer itself, is of money—nothing but money. If her father falls asleep after dinner he mumbles about stocks and prices—if a neighbour dies, he speculates on the cost of the funeral; the very atmosphere is weighed down with covetous whisperings and the echoes of hard bargains. I do not blame her."

They were strolling on as they talked, and he broke little bits of twigs from the bushes and cast them idly into the stream.

"Then she knows that my life has been darkened by poverty. That there are many—not more industrious and not more clever, perhaps—who are far on the road to success while I am still a beggar. She knows that such little talent as I have can never buy me distinction or honour in this country, unless I can back its feeble stress with gold. She knows that my father was an unfortunate 'gentleman,' and lived to be patronized by his shoemaker, and to receive half scornful nods from his tailor."

"That made him none the worse."

"But more unhappy. The proudest spirit breaks at last when thrust into the dust by fortune, to be trampled on for ever by the vulgar and the mean—as he was. Curse them! These men can see the difference in the blood of their cattle and pigs, they know the distinctions between the carthorse and the racer, they acknowledge gradations in the quality and value of unreasoning beasts, but deny it to the nobler beings their Maker has created in his image! And this they call democracy!"

"Perhaps they go too far the other way in older countries. Perhaps they are too ready to set men over each other, and exact honours for them which should only be paid to HIM alone."

"Perhaps. But what is the idolatry they substi-

tute here? A very Mammon's. The naked worship of the golden calf. They give plenty of religious liberty otherwise. You may worship as you list, or let it alone altogether; but dare to scorn or hold in contempt this money god—dare to refuse your homage to his priests, never minding how they got their benefices—dare to dissent from the thirty-nine articles in the prayer-book of Plutus—and although the tortures of the Inquisition or the fires of Smithfield may not be revived for your body as for unhappy heretics, your social punishment and disabilities will hardly be less. Being in Rome you must do as Romans do; you must conform or starve."

The girl gazed thoughtfully in the stream for a moment, and answered—

"Your peculiar experience makes you unjust, I think. There are many poor men whose names will live in the nation's history; men who never had wealth or strove for it, and whom their countrymen yet delighted to honour. I see no harm in your trying honestly to amass a fortune; it is necessary to your happiness: you are sensitive, and fret under the ills, real and imaginary, which want of it entails; it may hereafter enable you to do good. Why should you not, then, struggle to obtain it?"

"Why not, indeed."

"And yet, considered singly and abstractedly, what an ignoble incentive to exertion!"

"Ignoble?"

"I call it so. That is, for any one capable of anything higher or nobler, and having in view the elevation of those whom he loves and who love him. Now if I were a man, and had a—Virginia——"

"Well?"

"That is, supposing Virginia to be the Virginia she would have to be for me to love her, I should feel degraded in her eyes even by the avowal, the confession, that money was the principal object of my ambition. As an accessory to comfort and convenience it might be well enough, and not to be despised. But I should not believe I truly loved—nay, more, I doubt if any one ever truly loved—when the thought of the beloved object did not awaken a loftier ambition, if there were need of any at all. I should feel that to accomplish some noble action—to attach my name to some deed or cause which should enlighten or confer a benefit on mankind—to aid the oppressed, or to teach truth when truth was unpopular, and its advocates had to contend against the powerful, the scornful, and the unwilling;—I should feel that to do these, or any of these, was of more worth as a trophy to lay at the feet of the loved one than all the gold that lies buried in the hills of California!"

The girl turned and stood still in her earnestness as she spoke; her tall figure dilating, her breast heaving, and her great black eyes flashing with enthusiasm.

Something like a flush of shame mounted to Gifford's brow as he replied:—

"And if your idol cared not for these offerings—held them cheap to the more material if less romantic one?"

"It should be mine to lift her to a higher sphere, to elevate her nature to a height which is possible for every human soul when rightly directed and adequately inspired,—to a height where her desires would cease to be grovelling, her aspirations incapable of being mean."

They walked on again, and the young man ceased to break twigs and cast them into the stream. The girl resumed half musingly:—

"For why is love given in this dark world, but that its light may enable us to help each other upward and onward in the sublimest path; but that the devotion of one soul to another may endow it with the clearest, the most unerring perception as to the manner in which the beloved spirit may be developed to the highest excellence—to the grandest expansion of which it is capable; and, knowing the means, should continually stimulate the chosen one to their adoption?"

"I fear Virginia would scarcely comprehend such thoughts as these."

"Then you should teach her."

Once more they wandered on in silence, presently broken by Hugh:—

"Perhaps one day you will teach her for me—you know we are always to be friends."

"Always. But does Virginia say nothing more?"

"Not so much as Marian has said this morning."

"Marian!—It was Miss Rooke last night."

"Ah, there was a stranger; and as Mrs. Armstrong persists in changing your name into one she thinks more euphonious, it was needless to advertise the discrepancy."

"Good Mrs. Armstrong; she always would have it 'Mary Ann,' and it was too unimportant to correct her. The name was familiar to her, and I suppose her ear would recognize no distinction were I to have done so. The strange gentleman seemed interested in our little circle."

"He seemed inquisitive enough."

"Was he—disagreeably so? I did not notice it. He struck me as educated and well bred."

"Do you think him attractive—handsome?"

"I scarcely scrutinized him closely enough to answer as to the latter," said Marian, laughing, "but I *did* think him rather attractive."

Gifford's brow clouded slightly. "He is a gentleman, or something like one, and you have been thrust among rude people of late."

"But very, very kind ones, all. The Armstrongs have been like parents to me, and what could be more courteous,—nay, chivalrous,—in the way of

demeanour to a poor 'lorn damsel than that of Luke?"

Again the cloud. "Luke is at no pains to conceal his admiration."

"Admiration! Luke! Why he feels toward me something as he does toward dear Kitty—the regard of a brother."

"And brothers in his rank of life are always bringing their sisters fragrant wild flowers, and curious bits of minerals, and strange fragments of golden dust and ore-bearing quartz, and finding lovely mountain views for them, and solemn, glassy lakes among the hills, and training vines which bear sweet-scented blossoms over their chamber windows!"

"No, no; these are for all of us; and besides, you forget that I am the 'stranger within their gates.'"

"Not always to remain so, perchance."

"To remain," said Marian, putting the most obvious construction upon an ambiguous speech, "until midsummer, at furthest. My friends here are very good, but I have work to do for myself. When we first came, I was ignorant as to the nature and extent of the settlement; but it is clear now that I must go to one of the towns. There are no children to teach in the mines. They are to be sought among the families of traders in the cities."

"You will go forth alone?"

"Why not? It is my duty—should be my pleasure; and I must earn my bread."

"You are not fit for such a life. You have not been trained to it. You will find its drudgery irksome, if not insupportable."

"I do not fear it. I believe we are so constituted that we can accomplish almost anything, however foreign or repugnant at first sight it may appear;—anything which is undertaken with a firm heart and a resolute purpose. I am grateful to these worthy people, but, except for their love and kindness, do not mean to be under obligations to them. I shall go in July."

"And I, I think, before that."

"You?"

"I am impatient—feverish. The beggarly gains to be gleaned on the Bar may answer for the others—not for me. Nor is there any necessity they should. The newspapers may contain exaggerations, but it is certain that great discoveries are being made all over the country. The gold-lists of the mail-steamers tell a story not invented by the scribblers. What others do, I can do."

"There is a chance at any moment of striking vast deposits here as well as elsewhere."

"A chance, yes. But we have been here several months, and the yield has been most niggardly; less than the average at any of the surface diggings we have accounts of. It was thought, from the situation

of the river, and its having its rise so close by in the mountains, that this spot would prove one of the most productive; but it has turned out the reverse. The Armstrongs seem disposed to remain, but that need not control my course. Our arrangement of partnership is terminable any week, and that which satisfies them does not satisfy me."

"'The rolling stone——'"

"Is just the one which *does* gather moss in gold countries. It is vain to waste time in places where careful search is unremunerative. I believe the true policy to be that of moving from point to point with all convenient speed, so that each failing successively, another experiment may at once be tried. Ultimately the lucky discovery must be made, and fortune be the result."

"And—with fortune—happiness?"

"Alas! who knows?"

CHAPTER IV.

THE party were at breakfast when a growl from Lion, followed by the swift patter of a horse's hoofs, told that a stranger was approaching. "Somebody from the Bend, maybe," suggested Seth Armstrong, "come over for their letters." But his helpmate, looking out of window, negatived this supposition: you could tell miners, indeed, from afar off; their almost invariable dress being such as was worn by our friends at Armstrong's Bar. A red flannel shirt, belt, trousers thrust in strong, coarse boots rising above the knee, and a wide-brimmed felt *sombréro* constituted their uniform, which was recognizable from a greater distance than was commanded on the winding road from the windows of the cabin.

"'Taint no miner," said Luke, as he thrust his curly head into the aperture next his mother's; "'taint no miner, in a dress coat and a stove-pipe hat! Darn my skin," he exclaimed with sudden interest; "if it ain't that there Pangburn come back agin!"

"Show!" said Seth; "I thought we'd seed the last of him for a spell—them lies o' his'n in the

Mountain Clarion ought to have kept him off the Bar a month o' Sundays."

"How little," quoth the Doctor, "do you appreciate the Pangburn turn of mind; or you might know that nothing short of a pestilence would keep him away from a place when he wasn't wanted."

"S'posin' we set Lion on him," suggested Mr. Railes, "and then he daresn't git off his hoss!"

"No, no," said Seth, promptly, "that won't do; give the critter a fair show now he is here; only, Doctor, pr'aps if you or Mr. Gifford was jest to hint that we felt a little riled about the way he *advertised* the Bar, it might make him kearful another time."

"Never fear, Uncle Seth," said the Doctor, "but that we will administer proper admonition. Not but that the hide of an alligator is less likely to be proof against such persuasions than that of Zelotes; yet, as a matter of duty, we will try the experiment."

The subject of these complimentary allusions was now at the door, and Ike being sent to take charge of his horse, he speedily made his way into the apartment.

Mr. Pangburn was about six feet in height, and was arrayed in a seedy black dress coat and trousers, the latter stuck into a pair of huge Wellington boots, ornamented with red morocco tops. He wore a high shirt collar, extremely grimy, and encircled by a faded pink and yellow muslin cravat. On his head was a tall black beaver hat, and on his hands

enormous buckskin gloves. His hair, beard, face, eyes, and teeth, seemed all of one colour, namely, a dirty whitish brown; and the latter projected in a manner highly suggestive of the species called the rodentia. Of beard, indeed, there was little except on the end of the chin, where it focalized in a pointed, bristly tuft. Mr. Pangburn's inability to quite cover his teeth with his lips gave a not otherwise prepossessing countenance a sardonic expression fearful to behold; and his habit of shutting one eye in conversation as he launched forth his sentences, completed the more salient attractions of his physiognomy. Such was the remarkable figure which now made its way into the little house of the Armstrongs.

"How *air* you, Kernul Armstrong, and ladies, and how *air* you, boys and strangers! Glad to see ye. Here's twenty copies of the last Clarion, 'nuff to go all round the settlement, never mind about pay, jest as good for an advertisement. Thank you, mum, don't kear if I do, hain't liquored since I left the Cascades. Just so; much obleeged, and news there ain't none, for the last steamer had to put into Acapulco short of coal, where the capting, in a fit of delirium tremens, jumped overboard and cut his throat. That's all sence Toosday, 'xcept Sacramenty's burnt down Sunday night, fire lightin' in Bella Union, gamblers got fightin', spilt the ile, spirit lamps run through carpet roof into prayer-meetin'

below, 'hull town built up agin next mornin' with cotton-duck; Kernul, I'm a lookin' at yer!"

This speech, delivered in a high key and precisely as the speaker would have addressed a public meeting, was emphasized with innumerable winks, and succeeded by what appeared to be a highly sarcastic leer, which, commencing with the Kernul, swept around until it included the entire company.

"Mr. Pangburn," commenced Dr. Landale, with a gravity becoming the approaching accents of reproof, "I have been deputed to name to you that we who live on the Bar were not quite satisfied with the account you gave of us and it last month, in your enterprising journal, and——"

"Knew you weren't, knew you weren't," interrupted Mr. Pangburn, derisively; "knew darned well you'd have your dander up about that. Couldn't help it—three new placers, rich diggin's, broke out on Coyote Creek and Kettletas Run—public attention to be directed to twenty other places, so's to keep the rush from them—Armstrong's Bar one of the twenty; two slugs and hundred copies of the Clarion—business you know—increase the circulation."

"Do you mean to say you publish false statements to the effect that gold is plenty where it is scarce, to distract the attention from those where miners could really find it?"

"False statements!" echoed Zelotes, grinning with irony. "The Mounting Clarion is true, sir, as the

needle to the Pole, to them immutable principles of public weal and commercial rectitood, wheron it fust took its proud stand, and mocked the embattled world! That's so. A story, sir, may kinder git the colour, as the diggers say, without bein' stuck together out of 'hull cloth. I allowed I had a high opinion of Armstrong's Bar; my sentiments is unchanged and unalterable. Folks oughtn't to find fault with the lofty sperits chained to the oar of journalism—enlightinin' and a rushin' forrard the ungrateful masses, until they know the 'hull truth—until they're kind o' sot face to face with the paower behind the throne!"

"Well, sir," said the Doctor, impatiently, "being in that juxtaposition, I now tell you that what you published, besides being untrue in point of fact, was seriously prejudicial, both to the interest and the convenience of this little community."

"Pettikilarise, pettikilarise; state the items, state the items!"

"You declared that the diggings on the Bar were turning out among the richest in the country; and, in confirmation of this singular fable, you added that the settlers were taking out at the rate of fifty dollars a-day to the man."

"Jest so, jest so," replied Mr. Pangburn, running his fingers through his lank hair, "them air the facts!"

"Then how can you justify them?"

"Justify 'em? I glory in 'em. Measured by a narrer principle of temperary expediency, they may seem vain and illoosive to the short-sighted and rash; they may illicit condemnation from the hasty and censorious; but what care I?

> 'Truth crushed to airth will rise again,
> The eternal years of GOD are her'n;
> But error, wounded, writhes in pain,
> And dies amid her worshipper'n.'

That ere is the proud predicament of yours respectfully, Z. Pangburn."

"Your argument may be forcible, sir; but I fail to see its application to the practice of spreading false intelligence."

"You ain't heerd me out. Hear, and then condemn me if you kin. I said my opinions was unchanged, and I adhere to my primary assertion. I stick to it like death to a dead nigger. I said the Bar was a pooty place, and it *is* a pooty place. I said there was rich diggin's on the Bar, and I b'lieve that there *air*. What I said about the exact amounts that was took out, I allow savoured of hyperbole. It was a festive vision of the happy futur', perhaps, rather than a cold recital of the livin' present. But I'm ready to back my opinions, I am, even on that pint. I b'lieve in 'em, and I'm ready to stand or perish with 'em. What I propose, Kernul and gentlemen, is a jint-stock company—yes;" and the speaker, rising with his theme, glared about with a smile of fiendish sarcasm, "yes!" lifting his voice to

a nasal yell. "A jint-stock company to unkiver and develop the hidden treasures of Armstrong's Bar!"

"Hooray!" screamed Ike, from the corner, quite excited by this oratorical outburst, while Lion chimed in with a grievous howl.

"I know'd," pursued the orator, availing himself of the general stupefaction which succeeded these demonstrations, and his own proposal to enforce its advantages; "I know'd when the Mounting Clarion spread its glad tidin's upon the air—the tidin's my honourable friend here hists his dander at—that its editor would be blamed, and its sources of information scouted as unworthy of credick; and I was prepared to tote round the load of temperary ignerminy which them tidin's would cost and involve. But Pangburn looked to the future like true nobility, and found his blazon in posterity. That's so. He saw that when he should come on the Bar, as he has come among ye this day, and after explainin' the motives which actooated his course, should offer to ratify his sentiments, touchin' the riches of the location, by puttin' down his own dimes, and goin' in with ye on the jint-stock principle, that yer prejudices agen him would vanish like a vapour wreath that dims the summer moon—that he would no longer be regarded among ye as Pangburn yer tradoocer, but as Pangburn yer benefactor! True, I give the Bar a good name when aperiently it didn't deserve it.

Why? It answered my purpose in two ways. It directed the squatter interest on to the spot, and when it come, it was disappointed. Now it's got a bad name, and when the gold *is* found, if all the papers from Oregon to Mariposy was to blow their horns they couldn't undo the work of the Mounting Clarion! That air's my statesmanship, that is, and after I've chucked in a few o' them buckwheats, I'll explain to ye at 'hull length whar I think the gold is a hidin' and how I come to think so. And if I ain't as much mistaken as the man who lost his shirt, fortin' awaits us; fortin' on a big scale, the 'hull hog and no discount; and then Hail Columby and the Atlantic States, happy return of Z. Pangburn to love and Utiky!"

The speaker here concluded his harangue, and after once again showing his teeth to the company, in a manner at once threatening and scornful, he employed them with characteristic vigour upon the viands before him.

It is true that most of his hearers were disposed to regard Mr. Pangburn's views with a suspicious rather than with a sanguine eye. But it must be remembered that this was a time when glowing anticipations, such as his, were often more than realized. Many were the instances in those early days of men landing penniless at San Francisco, and becoming within three months the possessors of thousands. Many were the cases of people who

never in their lives possessed a hundred dollars, until they scraped together all possible resources to buy their passage-tickets, accumulating even in less time what to them were princely fortunes. There were not wanting examples where diggings, like those at Armstrong's Bar, had been abandoned as unprofitable, and subsequent adventurers, more lucky than the first, had stumbled on the treasure and grown rich upon the wealth which their predecessors had left undiscovered. It was by no means incredible, then, that such an example might be repeated on this very spot or in its immediate vicinity; and although a man's discretion as well as his candour might be doubted when, by inducing many to come where few had explored before, he augmented the chances of a discovery which it was his professed interest to avoid; yet he might be knowing to circumstances which made discovery next to impossible, and might easily be forgiven for seeking to give the settlers so strong an evidence that they were unlikely to effect it as would lead them to put a just value on his own agency, which could supply the clue.

It was not, therefore, remarkable that those who had so sharply stigmatized their flowery visitant an hour before, and who even now accorded him but a grudging confidence, were yet not unwilling to consider his proposals, and to investigate his grounds for auguring success. There could be small harm in

hearing what he had to say, even if nothing came of it. They would, in such a case, be no worse off than at present, and there was a chance, on the other hand, of the happiest results. It was soon agreed, therefore, between Seth, the Doctor, and Gifford, who retired as a Committee of Consultation pending the devastating onslaught of Zelotes upon their provender, that that worthy should have full opportunity to make good his words, and if he would, to share in the profit he anticipated. They all came there for gold; and, provided they got it, there would have been little objection, on most parts, to Mephistopheles himself as a stockholder in the company.

"The long and the short of the matter is," observed the Doctor, "that the fellow is an unprincipled rascal; but if he is cunning enough to teach us something we don't know, we needn't stand in our own light."

"I hardly know what to think on't," said Seth, thoughtfully; "I don't see why a chap who's only been on the Bar once afore is like to know more 'bout it than men who've been diggin' round goin' on six months."

"After all," suggested Hugh, "what harm can he do? What we make now can scarcely excite his cupidity that he should wish to share it on the same terms—hard labour and small profit. Let him point out his wonderful secret. If he trifles with us, we

can warn him off the Bar and so be rid of him altogether."

With this understanding the conference ended, and it was forthwith announced to Mr. Pangburn that the party were willing to tolerate his presence and to listen to his explanations. That gentleman, however, having stimulated the curiosity and raised the expectation of his hosts to the highest possible pitch, was now disposed to secure his own interests in the pending bargain. He represented, with a show of reason which could not be gainsaid, that, if by his instructions the yield of gold should increase largely on the Bar, it was but fair that he should share in the advantage thereof; and as the others were collectively indebted to him in such a case for their augmented emolument, they should be willing to allow him a liberal percentage. There were two other parties in the immediate neighbourhood who managed their affairs much in the same way with that pursued at Seth Armstrong's: that is to say, the bands worked in concert, and divided regularly all that they gained. Over these bands Armstrong's party had, of course, no control; for although the spot had received the name of the first comer, by common consent, he had no legal or prospective sway over their actions. A friendly feeling existed, especially as some of the men had been of the party in crossing the plains; but beyond this, and with the exception of coming thither for supplies and occa-

sional letters, there was no particular intercourse with, nor were these men in any sense amenable to, those at the immediate Bar. Mr. Pangburn was, of course, perfectly aware that, failing negotiations with the latter, he could easily open fresh ones with the others, and he calculated that this knowledge would have its effect in producing an acquiescent disposition on the part of his present hosts. All he wanted, he assured them, was what was fair. He always looked out for number one, he did, but he didn't go in for no chizzlin'. He allowed he ought to git pooty fair pay for his time, and the Mounting Clarion might suffer some when he was away. Those fellers over to the Bend would give half the profits to anybody who'd put *them* on such a lay, they would. But he went fur for friendship, he did. He always stuck by his friends through thick and thin; and he liked Mr. Armstrong and the others very much. Mr. A. was an Amurikun of the sort he liked; he was his kind, he was. Give him a man that was not passion's slave, and he would wear him in his heart of hearts as he did Seth. Also the Doctor and Mr. Gifford, either of whom he would be pleased to have contribute to the Clarion. Did they see the pome in the last number—"Haowl on ye base and hireling crew"? They'd find it was kind of gritty; being an effusion of his own, suggested by hearing the *coyotes* bullyraggin' round the Clarion office at night, and remindin' him of the legislatur' at Sacramenty last

winter, when they refused to vote for Pangburn for State printer. Somethin' in that way would be always acceptable. 'Specially as they were likely to be pard's when this 'ere bargain was struck and brought to a conclusion. In the meantime, he reckoned that about twenty-five per cent. on the excess of what they might git through his advice, over and above the former average, would make 'em square.

The others demurred to this proposition. Mr. Pangburn might know a lead that they were ignorant of; but they were likely, at any day, at any hour, to strike it. Gold digging and washing were very hard work, and their plan was share and share alike. The democratic principle was surely most applicable to a species of labour, where, without merit or demerit on the part of any individual, without either industry or indolence, he might get nothing by a day's work, and his neighbour a hundred dollars or more. They always divided even, at the Bend, at Yankee Jim's, and at every other place they knew of. It didn't work well to change the rule, and they had better not try it. Besides, Mr. Pangburn would frequently be obliged to leave them, and thus the company would lose the advantage of his services, a consideration not to be forgotten in estimating their general value. Thus far the Doctor as spokesman for the Bar.

Zelotes had heerd his honourable friend with

minglin' emotions. He was surprised to hear the help he was about to bestow, comin', as he was, to lead 'em on to fortin' and to fame, should be so far disparaged as to be only counted as the ordinary toil of an ordinary man. As for the Bend and Yankee Jim's, they was the Bend and Yankee Jim's. What he was a contemplatin' of now was to serve his friends at Armstrong's Bar. When they allowed they didn't want the arm or voice of Pangburn, it would be time enough to think of other folks who might. He thanked 'em from the recesses of his inmost soul for their solicitood touchin' the interests of freedom's banner, the Mounting Clarion. It was nateral that they, sons of liberty as they was, should feel anxious about the prospects of her favourite organ; and when he told them he had arranged that those prospects should be attended to in his absence, he knew they could be happy. When he mentioned the name of Eli S. Barlow as that of the distinguished scholar he had engaged to supplement the labours of Pangburn, and ile the machine in his absence, they would feel satisfied that all was well. He was the partner of their toils, their feelings, and their fame, he was; and twenty per cent. on the gross receipts was what he would take, and ne'er a cent less.

An agreement was finally effected upon the last-named basis; a prudential clause being inserted, that under no circumstances was the division to be made when it would leave to the original settlers a daily

stipend inferior to the average they had been receiving. This precaution would, at all events, prevent any injury to established rights from resulting as a consequence of the innovation; while it placed the new comer in a position which would oblige him to increase the general wealth, or, as an alternative, to entirely waste his time. Such was the treaty which, being pronounced to be fair to all parties, now received the general acquiescence and solemn ratification.

CHAPTER V.

MR. PANGBURN was a person by no means without sagacity. Acuteness of a certain kind constituted, indeed, the leading characteristic of his mind. Of education, in the usual sense of the term, he had little or none. He had been sent to a district school for the winter months during several years of his boyhood; those of the summer having been engrossed by hard work on his uncle's farm. But the snowy intervals, which were supposed by that thrifty yeoman to be devoted to learning, were, on the contrary, chiefly employed in speculations of a mercantile character, whereby his schoolfellows were the sufferers, and in the manufacture of sleds, shipping and other marketable commodities, to the fashioning of which Zelotes brought much zeal, and no little ingenuity. To do him justice, he was never indolent; and although what he called "hooking Jack" caused him to grow up awfully deficient in even the simpler branches of a country boy's education, more especially in spelling and grammar, he had at eighteen already amassed a small capital, and knew more of

the little world about him than any of his by no means artless contemporaries.

To get at the key-note of Mr. Pangburn's nature, you had only to keep one thing steadily in view, which was, that the acquisition of money was never for an instant absent from his mind. Wherever he went, with whomsoever he talked, this important matter was always uppermost there, and no larger subject, no higher thought, was by any chance permitted to thrust it aside. If he ever thought of the ocean, it was with regret that it should be so unnecessarily extensive, and that the utmost ingenuity or industry of man could only be expected to wrest from it a certain limited quantity of "made land." If his reflections ever touched upon the sun, moon, and stars, they were mingled with regret that physical obstacles prevented those luminaries from being chopped up into quarter sections, or staked off in claims. He had, it is true, at his tongue's end, plenty of the current slang about matters as spacious as liberty, national glory, the freedom of the press, and the destiny of his country; but he meant no more by them than is meant by the perpetual beating of the gong during a Chinese play; they were the conventional and duly expected accompaniments of the drama of his daily life, his exits and his entrances, his dialogue and his "business." They had no true relation to either, but the audience expected them as a matter

of course, and as a matter of course the audience got them.

Now although Mr. Pangburn may not appear from this description to have been eminently fitted for the character of a public instructor, it is certain that the Mountain Clarion, as blown by him, was heard afar off, and often with considerable effect. He was too cunning not to be aware of his own deficiencies where they were likely to affect his pocket; and although he could not conveniently spell himself, he always managed to have a sub-editor and a compositor who could. Generally speaking one person united the two offices, although since the advent of Eli S. Barlow, this economical expedient had been disused. The Clarion had been blowing only a few months at the time when our history commenced; but it had, as I have said, not been unheard. Zelotes perceived with early intuition that where a population was increasing with such unexampled rapidity, where gold was being ravished from the earth in such unheard-of profusion, there must speedily arise conflicts of interests and struggles of parties which would cause a printed advocate to become valuable. He possessed himself of one of the first printing-presses which had been brought into the country, a battered and ancient engine which had doubled Cape Horn, after seeing the life and death of more than one country newspaper in little New England towns. But it was a wonder when it first appeared among

the diggings, and its sway and name grew great in mouths of wisest censure.

Mr. Pangburn employed his Organ, as he somewhat incorrectly termed the Clarion, with great assiduity for the furtherance of what was stereotyped over the leading article as "The Interests and Prospects of this Great, Free, and Prosperous Community," and in his own breast as the Interests and Prospects of his cherished pocket. When he could get black mail from claim owners, town projectors, or political aspirants, he took it, and the Clarion burst into a glad song of praise, and warbled in cadences of unmingled eulogy. When he was disappointed through the obstinacy or stupidity of such speculators, the Clarion gave vent to solemn denunciation or, in the way of variety, ran up and down the gamut of coarse vituperation. The Organ, however, was costly, wages and material being enormously high; the subscribers being chiefly of a migratory character, were often oblivious of their obligations; and finally, there were considerations of a personal nature which made it yise for the proprietor to absent himself as much as possible from the office. He had therefore taken to riding through the country with a view to augment his subscription list, to solicit advertisements, and, as he averred, to "take a hand in wherever he see a chance to make somethink.'

In this speculative frame he had first visited

Armstrong's Bar; and having to this extent outlined his pursuits and character, I may proceed to describe the immediate motives which led Mr. Pangburn to believe that he could make this quiet spot the scene of a fresh golden triumph. Although utterly without philosophical lore of a profound character, no one was quicker than this man in grasping the theory of physical phenomena, which he could make subsidiary to money-getting. He knew, as he often declared, as well as any one, that water would run down hill. To the careful consideration of so simple a commonplace as this, with the cognate incidents which it, like the water, always carries in its bosom, many a great fortune has since been due. Whenever Mr. Pangburn struck running water in this land of gold, he immediately began to examine and peer about the adjacent country in order to satisfy himself as to whether it had always been flowing in its present channel. There was no particular novelty in this idea. Dr. Landale had thought of it when he first came on the Bar. But the difference was that the Doctor, with all his scientific knowledge, had failed to hit on a fact that Zelotes with nothing but his insatiate thirst for gold had detected. The little river which ran by the door of our adventurers had indeed long, long before forsaken the old track through which it had struggled to get toward the sea. The neighbouring country was greatly diversified, and scored here and there with rifts and

gullies and deep ravines. By one of those accidents of heavy freshet, or volcanic eruption, or crumbling soil, which ofttimes produce such mutations, the bed of the stream had been changed.

Between Armstrong's Bar and the place which has been alluded to as "the Bend," the inequalities of the surface were most rugged and bold; and this was the case for a mile or more towards the interior. The curve of the stream between the two settlements was elliptical in shape, and very long; to that degree that, while the distance between them by water could not have been less than six or seven miles, it was less than a third of that space across the country. Now the water had found its way long ages before from one point to the other in nearly a straight line; and only had recourse to its present devious path when, through the unknown cause referred to, it could adopt no other. The old bed then, lay between the Bar and the Bend, and deflected towards the present one about a mile below the former; and this was what the astute Mr. Pangburn had discovered.

The cabin of the Armstrongs was almost immediately on the bank of the river, and not more than a mile, perhaps, from its ancient channel. But such was the broken character of the intervening country, that no horse could traverse it, and a man would find it extremely difficult. To get to the place, then, from the Bar, it was necessary to go down the stream for

about a mile, and then make one's way up again, in a direction far to the right of that which has just been described. This, after profound cogitation, Mr. Pangburn had done. He had gone in the saddle as far as he could penetrate. He had then dismounted, encouraged by the signs he found about him, and made his way onwards after securing his horse to a tree. His path was by no means an easy one, for it crossed at almost every turn with thickets and thorns, and huge fragments of rock, and impenetrable *chaparrel*. Still he was more and more sanguine of the correctness of his supposition as he got further. Finally he came to a dark, narrow gorge, which seemed absolutely impassable, and which could neither be avoided nor taken in flank. The soil under his feet was gravelly and uneven, and he slipped at almost every step, but he had struggled manfully on until this last obstacle became manifestly insuperable. At that moment, his eyes getting used to the twilight, the heart of Zelotes leaped to his mouth and his skinny frame thrilled with joy; for there in front of him, piercing the gloom of the deep ravine, and in spite of the intervening brush, he saw on the ground a tender sparkle which made his spirit exult as it never exulted before. It was a fragment—tiny indeed, but still a fragment—of virgin gold.

When the editor of the Clarion left the ravine, his saddle-bags were stuffed with earth he had scraped

from its bottom. And the first result of the careful washing of that earth at the earliest favourable opportunity was a good ounce and a half of the precious metal. The second, as we have seen, was that of leading him to return very soon to the Bar, and to make that proposal to its denizens which has been already described.

It is improbable that our discoverer would have brought himself to admit others to share his counsels and his profits but for a necessity which could not be avoided. He had with great labour and pains brought away enough of the precious soil on which to try a conclusive experiment. This had involved time as well as labour, which were to be added to the chances of detection when any wayfarer might step in to anticipate or divide his gains. To turn his discovery to the best advantage it would be necessary to convey water to the spot; not in slender driblets, but in a copious and a continuous stream. Such a supply could only be obtained from the river, and must be brought thence by some mechanical contrivance. There were no quartz-mills in those days, and although mercury was often used to separate gold from dross, the method most in vogue was the simplest; that is to say, the method of placing the auriferous soil in any hollow vessel and adding water; after which by shaking, stirring, or rocking, the greater specific gravity of the gold would cause it to drop to the bottom, and the re-

mainder of the mixture being poured away, its most valuable ingredient would remain as a precipitate. Water must be carried from the river; and to carry out this necessity the aid of these on the Bar became indispensable.

Having unfolded thus much to his new friends, who listened with the gravest interest and attention, and having exhibited the gold he had procured in the Cañon by way of confirmation, Mr. Pangburn properly observed that the first thing to be done was to devise means for the transport of the first essential to success—the water of the river. This opportunity for the exercise of his abilities as engineer of the company put the Doctor in high spirits.

"What's the difference in level?" he inquired, briskly.

"I dunno. How should I? I reckon tho' it must be higher'n this, else what would the water run here for?"

"That doesn't follow. It would be very unfortunate if it did. The stream might have been diverted by an obstacle, which had no necessary connection with the land it ran over *afterwards*. It's true that the tendency of a disused channel is to fill up, as it is that of one in use to deepen; but we can determine nothing until we know the real difference of level."

"Well, how are ye goin' to git at it?"

"Easily enough, with a little time and patience; it will take more to build an aqueduct."

"We call that a *flume*, we do."

"Call it what you like, it's the same thing. But before we go to the expense of such a work we'd best test the place a little further."

All agreed as to the expediency of such a precaution, Mr. Pangburn being so satisfied with the prospect as to make no objection. A party was accordingly sent off under his guardianship, and, after three hours' absence, returned with a considerable quantity of the soil, taken out as he directed. The result showed that his sagacity was not at fault; for, from a quantity of earth about three times as great as he had first practised upon, they succeeded in obtaining nearly five ounces of gold-dust. In the meantime the Doctor had contrived to manufacture a couple of rods with sliding discs, and his theodolite being in tolerable adjustment, had commenced, with the help of Luke Armstrong and myself, to run a line of levels from the river to the new placer. It was evening when this labour was concluded, but the result was tolerably satisfactory; the surface of the water having been found to be some fifteen feet higher than that of the ground whence the earth had been taken. A consultation was held that night after supper, and it was resolved to transfer the scene of their daily toils to these newer and richer diggings. If, after a week, appearances continued

encouraging, the company would go to the great expense of bringing boards from the nearest saw-mill for the construction of a flume. For hewn timber they must rely on their own exertions; and as Dick Railes promised to see to that part of the work, just confidence was reposed that it would be thoroughly performed. It was considered that the water would necessarily fall very much as the dry season advanced, and this suggested the building of a sort of reservoir which should be supplied by force-pumps; an expedient which would enable water to be delivered at the new diggings, even when the stream should fall, if possible, to be as low as the level of the Cañon itself.

At the end of the week the party had taken out nearly sixty ounces of gold—a result which was voted to warrant the expense and labour of the flume. Accordingly the materials were contracted for; a proceeding of itself attended with some difficulty, since the experience of the last season had put the miners on their guard about providing for water in the dry solstice, and these structures were being put up all over the country, causing a great scarcity of the timber, whereof alone they could be made. The combination of pluck, science, steadiness, and cunning which was now at work on Armstrong's Bar was well calculated to overcome this or much greater impediments to success. In a

fortnight more the flume was built and in operation.

The fame of these operations of course was bruited abroad, and although the Mountain Clarion continued week after week to declare in the most unblushing manner that the diggers on the Bar were not making their salt, and that what had been discovered there had proved to be only inferior and scanty surface stuff, it could not deter some greedy adventurers, who would see for themselves, and who put no faith in Clarions, from settling in the neighbourhood. The original company, on the other hand, had staked out claims as extensive as the laws then allowed; and they possessed a vast advantage in their flume, which had cost the labour and capital of many to complete. Some time passed before another was attempted, and in the interval the gains of the company were steadily increasing. It became evident, even to the least sanguine, that a few months of such prosperity as they now enjoyed would make them all rich. Some who came to California wandered from point to point, setting up their tents now in one place, now in another, and departing from each as penniless as when they arrived. Some had tried a dozen experiments before finding what they called a paying location; and some unlucky ones never found such a location at all. The party at Armstrong's Bar were more fortunate. They had paid their way even in the worst of times;

they had not been lured to abandon the spot of their first election by glittering fables of others more prolific; and they seemed to be reaping the reward of their fidelity, in wealth which was now pouring into their coffers with swift and bewildering reality.

CHAPTER VI.

"A HUNDRED pounds of pure gold! It looks pooty, don't it?"

The speaker was Mr. Pangburn, and it was a Saturday night, about two months after that gentleman's association with the party at Armstrong's Bar. It was their custom on Saturday nights to add up the gains of the past week, and then to place them with the general store for safe keeping. In the absence of an iron-safe, a deep hole had been sunk in a corner of the cabin, which, with the aid of *adobe*, some flat stones, and a heavy wooden lid, or cover provided with hinges and a ring, constituted a sort of treasure-vault. In this receptacle there reposed during the rest of the week a strong iron-bound box, secured by two padlocks, and about two feet in length by one in height and breadth. On Saturday nights this box being unearthed, was put where it now stood, on the table in the middle of the room, to receive the fruits of the week's toil, and the admiring salutations of its collective owners. There it stood, wide open, with various little bags of nuggets, and some curious specimens of crystals and quartz-

bearing gold, arranged about its sides; but in the middle was a smaller box of tin, also furnished with a padlock, and also open; and in this inner sanctuary was the pile which feasted the loving eyes of Mr. Pangburn.

Gold was there in all shapes and many sizes: molten lumps which showed the action of fire, and rounded lumps which told of that of water. Large pieces of the size of a pigeon's egg, and tiny spangles scarcely bigger than the point of a pin. Queer-shaped bits, here and there, which fascinated the eye by grotesque resemblance to people's heads and legs; regular bits, now and again, like coins and ornaments, which you would scarcely believe had not been fashioned by human hands. Variety, too, in colour as well as in form, was there. Warm-looking gold, with the reddish tinge of copper; pale-looking, delicate gold, having some admixture of silver, with various intermediate shades between. A good deal of the precious earth was in the box; and it lay in little irregular heaps with mountains and valleys, and bright yellow plains and dark purple ravines breaking and diversifying its surface. The light fell from the chandelier, which was made of a hoop, and which hung from the roof, and the company were seated close to the table, with all their eyes riveted on the glittering heap in its centre.

Mr. Pangburn had insinuated himself rather nearer than either of the others, and was toying at the

treasure with his great coarse fingers, as if the sense of touch as well as that of sight gave him an exquisite pleasure; and, while he enjoyed himself with so undissembled a satisfaction, the Doctor, who sat opposite, seemed to be watching his hands with a flinty suspicion in his hard Scotch face that he was scarcely at pains to conceal. Perhaps he might have thought Mr. Pangburn capable of putting pitch upon his fingers, in anticipation of such an opportunity; and yet the surmise would have been unreasonable, since it was not difficult, if any one were so disposed, to overreach the others in the daily routine of work, by adroit processes of withholding and concealing; and, to do him justice, no one had ever seen a trace of such a disposition on the part of Mr. Pangburn.

"It's dreadful pooty stuff, ain't it?" repeated he, gloating over it with his hyena-like grin. "Twice as much as there is there 'd put up a 'hull stone-front block in Utiky."

"And would that be so desirable an investment?" queried the Doctor.

"It would that. You'd only put down 'bout half cost, borrow the rest on bond and mortgage at six per cent., git fifteen for the rent o' the stores, hev' Tricopherous Hall or somethin' overhead for nigger singers and temperance meetin's, fifty dollars a night, and church on Sundays; rum on storage down cellar—double your money in five year."

"Oh," said the Doctor, apparently satisfied, "and

that's your idea of laying out your 'pile,' when you make it?"

"Yes," replied Zelotes, "that's my idee. I might hev' an organ," he added, thoughtfully: "when a man's once had an organ he don't kind o' like to give up his holt on the public mind; it might be in Syracuse, and it might be in Schenectady; but the stone-front block in Utiky 'd be my first idee. What's your'n?"

"A cottage on the Clyde," half-sighed, half-mused the Doctor, a softer light coming over his hard features, "with many friends, and few patients; with plenty of instruments, and time to use them; with a pretty view, and enough to feel easy, without being rich."

"That wouldn't bring ye in no twelve per cent."

"No; but it would bring in something of more worth—content."

A sarcastic smile played across the lineaments of Mr. Pangburn. "We don't kear nuthin' 'bout content, we don't, until there ain't nuthin' else to git. Our motto is uppards and onnards. We air like Alexander, we air, and would shed tears as fast as the Arabian trees if there weren't no more worlds to conquer. The stream with a more sure resistless tendency seeks not the ocean than a Yank the next gitable dollar."

"I believe you," quoth the Doctor. "Well, Seth, you've heard two aspirations; let's hear yours—let's

hear the ambition of the oldest of us—of him who gave a name to the settlement."

"Why," said Uncle Seth, "I never tho't on't honest, until jest lately, when we got to take out so much dust. I've allers had to work, and I allers expect to; and I don't raally much calculate ever to git on without it as it is. I don't want to move no more, I don't. I've moved twice; first from the Bay State to the Buckeye, and then from the Buckeye out here. I don't go back over them plains agin, not if I know myself intimately."

"Then your ambition is simply to stay and be as you are?"

"Well, as to ambition, it's a big word, and I don't jest get the hang on't all in a minute. If it means things I'd like to do, why," looking up, and passing a horny hand through his grizzled hair, "p'raps a wood roof 'd be slicker 'n a cotton one—and a nice barn with stalls is a sight better 'n a *corral*. I *did* use to think," continued Seth, as the thought of an old memory—a youthful, half-forgotten aspiration played over his face—"I *did* use to think that if I was awful lucky, I'd like to spend my old age on the Blueberry Hill Farm at Old Saybrook; where my gran'father's bones is, my father havin' bad luck, and bein' obleeged to sell it when I was a little shaver. It's a costly farm, that is, and to own it would be the only thing to tempt me ever to pull up stakes agin. But I was allers content with what Providence seed

fit to send, and I ain't goin' to take to grumblin' now. It's well for all on us, 'pears to me that, let alone havin' a roof, we've got any scalps to put under 'em; and I'm willin' for one to rest and be thankful."

"It 'ud be more Christianer to jest think of totin' my chinay over here," muttered Mrs. Armstrong, shaking her knitting-needles and staring over her spectacles from the chimney corner, "since wishin' 's flyin' round; let alone six bureaus full o' linen fixin's and patchwork-comforters to reach from here to the Cañon. But I never see a thing in trousers yet but was mean and riley on patchwork and chinay."

"Stone front block, cottage on a somethink, and rest and be thankful on a wood roof instead of a cotton one," said Mr. Pangburn, briskly, and stirring up the gold with his forefinger, and then tasting it as if it were undergoing some culinary process, "What do *you* say, Mr. Gifford?"

"I?" said Hugh, carelessly, "why, I scarcely know. You say there are a hundred pounds weight there—scarcely ten thousand dollars; if I had, let us suppose, five times that amount, I dare say I should go and travel in Europe."

"Five times!" exclaimed Pangburn, aghast, "Fifty thousand dollars! Why you don't mean to say ye'd go and spend all that money among foreigners out o' yer own country?"

"I didn't say I should spend it all," replied Hugh;

then observing the horror of his interlocutor, he added, "although I dare say I might—European travelling is, I hear, very expensive."

"Well," observed Mr. Pangburn, derisively, "when ye get it ye can go and travel it aout; *I* give you leave. What's your notion o' spendin' your money, Dick Railes? P'raps *you'd* like to go a scatterin' of your substance on stony places, eh?"

"Not I," returned that worthy; "that ain't my style, that ain't. I don't want to scatter nuthin' unless it's shot if I kin get a good double barr'l, and not then if I can't hev a good smell dog in t' the bargain. I'd like a good house and a good horse and play-day 'bout half the time, and—" peering over toward the corner where Kitty sat blushing over her knitting, "a pooty gal to help me enjoy it."

"That's you," nodded Mr. Pangburn, approvingly, "symperthizin' allers with a taste for loveliness; only ye know, Dick, the more play the less dimes, a proverb never stale in thrifty minds. It's also hurd to resoom toil arter too much relaxation. When engaged in editoral duty on the Mountain Clarion, no one ever know'd me to unbend the bow, a circumstance which, besides servin' the public and keepin' active the intellectual faculties, also enabled me to bind Barlow to my will when he come to take charge; he see I never spared myself, and so prepared never to git spared hisself when his turn come to the bellows. The gen'us of our country is to keep

a pitchin' in; whereby the grass don't grow under her feet afore she hits somethink."

The company having duly admired this brief dissertation on industry, the Doctor proposed that Luke, who had remained silent, should impart his views as to the enjoyment of his prospective wealth.

"Allers rememberin'," cautioned Zelotes, "that ten thousand dollars in two months is equal to twenty thousand in four months, and thirty thousand in six; lettin' alone contingent finds and allowin' that nuthin' busts, up to the cañon."

"It seems like countin' our chickens afore they're hatched," said Luke, in response, "to talk about bein' rich yet awhile; but I think if I *was* to have my time, I'd like to git some books, and read and study for a year or two."

"Study!" echoed Zelotes, contemptuously. "What on airth d'ye want to study for? Been to grammar-school, ain't ye?"

"Three winters," answered modest Luke; "summers I had to work on the farm, like most folks down our way, and all I learned won't hurt me much. I think a man ought to try and improve himself when he gits a fair show, and don't have to work all the time."

"Wall," said the Editor, "my plan always was to do workin' and readin' the same time; workin' for the big licks, and readin' for fillin' up the chinks, and then ye don't lose nuthin'!"

"That may do for common things—'rithmetic and geography, and such—but if a man wants to make himself knowledgeable, so 's to fit himself to be with folks who are better educated than he's been used to, he's got to buckle down to it."

"You git money enough," chuckled Mr. Pangburn, "and you'll find yourself fit enough for any society they kin scare up. This ere yaller stuff teaches folks what's what a darned sight quicker'n any books that ever was writ; and what's more, there ain't nobody nowheres but what kin understand it."

"I don't vote for puttin' too much store on money, I don't," remarked Seth, mildly. "It's a very good thing to have, that's a fact, and our folks have felt the want of it. We've worked hard for our livin' so fur, and no mistake; but I allow I'd rather hear a son of mine had a good name among his neighbours and no more money, than to hear him called a rascal, and be ten times as rich as his father was."

"That's you, Seth!" exclaimed Mrs. Armstrong, from her corner. "I'm with ye there, chinay or no chinay. And as to that critter," she continued, in an undertone, and peering speculatively at Pangburn over her spectacles, "I think he'd sell *his* father, if he's got one, for thirty pieces, quicker'n a wink."

"Repootation," proceeded that critter gravely, "is a fig, oft got without merit and lost without deservin'. But eagles is eagles, and passes current all the world over."

"Anyhow," continued Luke, "it's a free country, and I take it we kin all spend our earnin's in our own way."

"That is so," acquiesced Pangburn, "and we don't hev' to pay it all away in taxes neither, like them 'ere downtrodden people in the old world. What the poor man gits the poor man keeps, and the sweat of honest labour ain't used to ile the hinges of luxurious pomp."

"Hail Columby!" bawled Ike, from his divan on the floor, where he was extended with his four-footed companion. "Hail Columby! and long live everybody but Ike and Lion! The only ones who know how to git the money. The only ones that knows how to spend it when it *is* got, and the only ones whose idees on the pint ain't asked for to teach the folks wisdom. Guess when the gold gives out on the cañon ye won't be so smart; like enough then ye'll come and ask us to show ye something, and perhaps then we won't do it. Talk of gold! All ye've got in that there cake-basket is no more to what Ike kin show ye than a minner to a whale, nor a huckleberry to a pumkin!"

"Well, and why don't ye then, Ike?" said Luke, soothingly. "Why don't ye show us?"

"Why don't mother, here, teach ye how to knit, or Lion to sniff out where the bones is? 'Cause it ain't fit for ye, and 'cause ye couldn't learn it, and 'cause it wouldn't do ye good if ye could," was Ike's,

as usual, unsatisfactory reply. But, for all his ailing wits, poor Ike worked as hard and as fairly earned his share as any one on the Bar. With his own free consent it had been agreed that Seth should take charge of this share, deducting what each regularly paid toward the expenses of the household. The Doctor, who had watched his case with interest, was of opinion that the change of scene from his old home on the Ohio, together with regular and healthful occupation, might effect a change for the better in his mental condition; but although there was now and then an apparently lucid interval, it was always soon interrupted by a relapse into his usual condition. It was a case, indeed, which some great and unexpected shock was more likely to restore than any monotonous routine of life, and such could only be brought about by fate or accident, and could not be improvised at will.

Whatever might be the varying hopes or ambitions of the members of our little band, there was no want of energy or ingenuity in the pursuit of the common object. Day followed day, and week succeeded week, and there was no sickness, no interruption, save on the Sabbath, to the lucrative toil. All worked as if this was the sole chance to overtake Fortune, and they were determined the fickle goddess should not escape them. Occasionally Mr. Pangburn would absent himself for a day or two's attention to the affairs of the Mountain Clarion, but the zeal and

vigour with which he resumed his post at the work on his return were universally allowed to compensate for such defections of his time. He had the art, too, of making himself generally useful in a manner which gradually gained on the popular esteem. He it was who brought pipes and tobacco, and replenished the failing supply of whisky. He who brought calicoes for the females, yarns for Mrs. Armstrong, even needles and pins, at times when those little articles were scarce and most needed. Occasionally newspapers from the Atlantic States, and even an odd volume or two would gladden the Sundays at the Bar with intelligence and food for reflection, which were much in request. Even the Doctor was in course of time propitiated by offerings of small knick-knacks in the way of stationery, and other trifles difficult to get in the mines, but quite necessary to his peace and comfort. Notwithstanding the uncouthness of his person and the unfavourable impression he had first made on many of the company, Mr. Pangburn was certainly improving upon acquaintance; and when it was remembered that he was, in a great measure, the author of the prosperity which they now enjoyed, it was not surprising that the settlers on the Bar grew in time to regard him very much in the light of a public benefactor.

CHAPTER VII.

I AM afraid Hugh Gifford was not a model hero. It has already been hinted that he did not impress me on our first acquaintance as a very prepossessing personage. I may as well go further, and say that it took a long time to find out the good that was really in him; and that it would not surprise me to know that the reader was very ready to appreciate the circumstance. He was in truth one of those people whom hard fortune and unfavourable surroundings lead into the habit of continually turning the worst side of their character outwards. Believing himself to have been ill used, whether by accident or fate; too proud to go through the world making complaints; having a finely-balanced mind, and a very sensitive nervous organization; despising, whether justly or not, most of those with whom he was brought in contact; habitually taking refuge in books, because debarred from congenial and appropriate society; believing from his earliest youth that there was something incongruous and oppressive in the social structure and political tenets which en-

circled him; feeling that he possessed talents which in a less depressing atmosphere would enable him to do good for mankind and satisfy his own self-respect, it was natural that with such qualities and with such disabilities he should have become reserved and suspicious; it was natural that he should have become very, very proud; and it was natural that he should be, at first at least, very much disliked by nearly all whom chance threw in his way.

It is not easy to defend such a character, but it would be most unjust to condemn it. A man who, by his coldness and reticence, habitually prohibits attempts at sympathetic intercourse, soon gains more disesteem than he deserves. We are apt to resent such a want of appreciation of ourselves by attributing to the offender bad qualities, of which he has given no other evidence, and of which he may really be innocent. He becomes exceedingly unpopular; and it is not an adequate recompence that such men, disliked by society, should always be the favourites of philosophers and—almost as invariably—the favourites of clever women. Such men have much to suffer; and whatever the origin of their peculiarities—whether they have sprung from the unmerited persecutions of fortune, or have their source in mere morbid egotism—the world is ever slow to do them justice—ever ready to listen to their censure. She loves not those who do not seek her in

spirit and in truth; she is bitterly hostile to those who affect to despise her.

There was something interwoven in the texture of Hugh's intellect from which he could no more escape than from the blood in his veins. A feeling of distaste for the ways of the people, by whom his boyhood and youth had been surrounded; a dislike of their dress, their speech, their physiognomy, their religious observances, their social practices; a loathing for the colourlessness of life, as life had to be lived among them; a hatred for square houses, and straight roads, and naked fields, and the other too numerous signs of dreary asceticism, of provincial intolerance. These were the outward and visible signs of a social condition, which seemed to his nature most repellant, and, as the producer of general happiness, a blank delusion. No servants or other blind teachers had ever infused prejudices into his mind. Had they made such efforts they would have made them in an opposite direction: they would have striven to persuade him that America was the choicest country in every respect in the universe; that New England was the choicest part of America; and that Massachusetts was the choicest part of New England. They would have taught him that her laws, her schools, her temples, her people, were more glorious than those of Imperial Rome, or of Academic Greece. They would have insisted that no system of government could

compare with one which placed its power in the hands of the ignorant many, and judiciously relegated to inert obscurity the thinking few: all these things they would have reported, and he would probably not have believed them; but no such experiment had, in point of fact, ever been made. His mind, such as it was, grew up and expanded, and took in such knowledge as it craved and could lay hold of, and arrived at its own conclusions.

He saw and felt early that to make any figure in the world he must first get money. That to get it he must meet and grapple with cunning and unscrupulous men, and perhaps become as cunning and unscrupulous as they. Where there was only one object of ambition, and the means universally regarded as indifferent provided the end were attained, it seemed clear that no one could reach that end and hope to preserve clean hands and an unsullied conscience. The case was simplicity itself. It was running a race in a narrow, filthy avenue with crowds of dirty competitors, and mountains of mud and slime to struggle through; yet there was nothing else to be done—there was no cleaner road, no selecter companions: it was this or nothing. The conclusion was revolting enough, but there was no help for it.

Having made up his mind to this, Hugh Gifford went his way, always secretly despising himself. He

was unfortunate, truly, in meeting no loftier natures than he did—natures which might have taught him where his errors lay, in a kindly spirit—might have revealed to him glimpses of that knowledge which surely comes to each and all of us sometimes, the fulness of which is as the eternal day. He was unfortunate in the women toward whom he had ever been attracted,—even in that lonely, helpless sort of way that men turn toward utterly uncongenial, incompatible women, in the absence of any more eligible or loveable,—vainly groping after the help and consolation which seems so long in coming. The last and gravest—it might almost be said the only—attraction of this kind had been no more productive than any other. He fancied he loved Virginia Chester, and no doubt he did admire her as much as any other ever could or would; but that he loved her as he was capable of loving was untrue; and he was tormented, even when most resolute in thinking of the prospective consummation of duty and inclination—their marriage—by a dismal consciousness of the fact.

Now whatever might be its permanent effect upon his character, his meeting and association with Marian Rooke made Gifford much less comfortable —less at ease with himself—less content to pursue the path he had inwardly traced out—than he had been before. She saw with that singular prescience which women of her stamp possess, and which is

unerring as it is inexplicable, that the young man had latent qualities of a far higher and nobler nature than those which appeared on the surface of his character,—qualities which needed appreciation, culture, encouragement, it is true, but which were not the less genuine and not the less worthy of all that could be bestowed to draw them forth. How far Marian was actuated by a warmer than a mere speculative interest in the matter, we may fairly leave for the present out of the discussion; suffice that her self-respect was of too high a standard to permit such a sentiment to become apparent, either to Hugh or others. True, they were often together, and seemed to take pleasure in each other's society; but it was known that Gifford was already engaged, and there was that about Marian which prevented people from indulging either in word or thought of the fleering sort, so common when young men and maidens talk much together. There was an exception to the general view in the breast of Luke Armstrong; but of that hereafter.

Sometimes by hints, sometimes by suggestions, sometimes by soaring pictures of what was her own ideal of life and its duties, sometimes by processes of questioning and inference too subtle to be more than shadowed by mere words, whenever the girl was with Gifford this awakening or developing influence was slowly but surely at work. Oftentimes it would be unconsciously to both, but it never ceased,

There would be occasions when Marian would feel that she had gone too far; that their relative situations did not warrant her seeking to reverse his convictions, or to change the current of his resolutions. There would be occasions when he would hold half-angry commune with himself, and determine that it was foolish, vain, impossible to overthrow the teachings of his whole experience, and to set up new objects of ambition. But neither of these occasions was productive of any tangible result; for that which was going on was chiefly involuntarily, and in obedience to immutable laws. The earth would go round the sun and not the sun round the earth, Papal decisions to the contrary notwithstanding.

I do not mean to convey the idea that through this regenerating influence Hugh Gifford was metamorphosed of a sudden from a warped, self-contained egotist, to a great-souled, high-minded man; that would have been too miraculous for real life, and we have to do with no other. The process, indeed, was a slow one, and, like the incoming tide, showed a long series of advances and retrocessions. When I began to know the man—I mean when I penetrated the first crust of his reserve, and caught glimpses of his real character—I doubted whether the good or the bad most predominated. It was a singular trait with him at that time to deal with people much in their own coin. I have known him

to get the better of unprincipled sharpers; to turn the tables upon them when they laid their deepest schemes to circumvent him, and positively to fleece them in turn. This surely was not right. It was what he could never have done had Marian Rooke stood near, watching his course with her calm, earnest eyes. But, on the other hand, if Hugh had to deal with a man of honour—with a person of plain, guileless integrity—there could be no juster judge, no more trustworthy friend. If he alone had had to deal with him, I doubt not Hugh would have even got the better of Mr. Pangburn; albeit it had been a marvellous encounter, and opinions might well waver as to its issue. But had he to deal with Seth Armstrong, or with his son Luke, you might adventure worlds that if there were an advantage, Hugh would cast it against himself.

It followed that tricky and dishonest people—and there were abundance of such in those early Californian days—were apt, on coming into contact with our hero, to hail him as one of their own order; and that upright, simple, and straightforward people—of whom there were unhappily but few—would put in a similar claim. Each class was equally sincere—equally right and equally wrong; but a comparison of their relative numbers would augur unfavourably for Hugh's reputation.

There were two of the company at Armstrong's Bar whose attachment to Gifford was utterly inde-

pendent of his merits or defects. Had he been an angel from heaven they could have clung to him no closer; had he been a fiend incarnate they would have loved him no less. These were Ichabod and Lion. The memory of the moment when by a happy accident the life of the latter had been saved by Hugh's interposition seemed ever fresh in the breasts alike of the animal and his master. Neither had the human wit to know why they should dislike, but both appeared to have gratitude enough to love a benefactor. The others of the party grew to understand and like him better as time wore on. Those especially who did not fancy Hugh before their great trial and deliverance on the Plains, were mollified by the courage and steadiness he had shown on that occasion. Dick Railes and his followers were of these converts: but none of them were or could be fit associates for Hugh; and their intercourse was limited to a common friendliness, such as came naturally with their common toil. Leaving Marian out of the question, none could be called his intimates, save these two alone.

So therefore it was, that whether engaged in the rude, rough labour of digging and washing for gold —whether strolling with Marian at early morning or in the dusky evening on the banks of the stream— whether exploring in the fastnesses and recesses of the mountains and forests for fresh sources of wealth, fresh signs of auriferous deposit—whether sitting

on the brink of a lovely little lake they had found perched clear away up among the hills—whether waking or sleeping—Hugh was all but invariably attended by a body-guard in the persons of the poor simpleton and his faithful dog.

CHAPTER VIII.

"So you'll not leave the Armstrongs after all. You won't go on a solitary ramble to hunt for fresh gold-fields, but will stay and make your fortune on the Bar?"

Thus said Marian, as they sat together one quiet Sunday morning by the shore of the lake which was perched up among the hills. They sat on a little cushion of velvet turf which crowned a tiny promontory jutting into the lake. A few feet below them lay the placid water, smooth as glass. Above were the tall branches of a great red wood, which neither waved nor whispered in the motionless air. All around lay an amphitheatre of low hills, their outlines broken here and there by spreading foliage; whilst masses of dark-grey rock, some imbedded in the earth, some lying apparently loose on its surface, relieved the green, and told the curious eye a story of not very remote volcanic commotion. At a short distance, on the edge of the water, crouched Ike, sedulously engaged in the difficult problem of making a little vessel he had carved of red wood, sail without wind; and Lion lay by, watching the endeavour

with incredulous apathy. It was a very lazy day, with a soft, lulling atmosphere, not common in regions where the air is so elastic. There were lumps of white cloud hanging over head and looking like gigantic powder-puffs, whose images were reflected in the mirror below, distinct and still as the originals.

"Who knows?" replied Hugh, tossing a bit of stick toward Lion, and managing to land it on his back; the dog turned quickly, and, seeing who was his assailant, gave a slow wag of his tail and resumed his languid observation of Ike. "Who knows? Things look promising enough so far, but we have no assurance of lasting success. The yield may drop as quickly as it rose. This gold-digging is very like a rocket; very brilliant one moment, very dull the next. All we can do is to make the most of it while it lasts. We have had a dazzling week of it, to be sure—nearly a thousand dollars a man; and the coming week may see us fall to our old average of fifty. Still, I grant the prospect is a good one."

"I am so glad," said Marian, "that you resisted that man's attempt to get the party to work on Sundays. Others do it, no doubt; but it would seem so dreary and barbarous—far away in these unpeopled wilds as we are, and a hundred miles from any church—to have no day of rest, nothing to remind one of the sweet Sabbath of childhood."

The miners on the Bar had resolved at the outset to do no labour on Sundays; and had found their account, as people usually will, by accomplishing quite as much in the six days as any of their neighbours did in seven. It was rare in those times for any of the diggers to respect the LORD'S day any more than another. Their feverish thirst for gold would have made them work by night, if nature and starlight would have allowed it. When the Sundays first began to be distinguished in the various diggings, it was rather, as in Catholic countries, as a day of festivity than one of prayer; gambling being the favourite diversion, with its usual concomitants of drinking and blasphemous revelry.

"I don't know that they get more gold," answered Hugh, thoughtfully; "but the men are more healthy and happy, for a day to bathe and tidy their clothes, and write their letters. There are sad scenes, we hear, in the larger places on Sundays. But we have gained as well as lost something by our isolation. Not but that we have a very good set; but the best of men will drink or gamble, or go a little wrong, so far from the restraints of home, and leading so strange, so unusual a life."

"You will make your fortune on the Bar," continued the girl, pursuing her former train of thought, "and return home rich. But you must not stay at home. That would be only to become settled and confirmed in ways and thoughts which are not best

for your future. You must travel; travel and study. There are many strange things you should know of —many you should see, which you have no great knowledge of now."

"True," said the young man, humbly, "too many."

"Don't say 'too many,' for that implies a hopelessness which doesn't belong to eight-and-twenty, good health, a fortune—in prospective, and a beautiful wife to encourage you."

"Equally in prospective!"

"You will travel—chiefly in Europe, for there almost all things are to be learned. You must spend your time mostly in England and France, for in those countries there is more to learn than in the whole of Europe beside. You must study their manners, their arts, their laws, and their governments—not superficially, but so as to have a substantial, if not a particular knowledge of them all. You must especially note the differences which exist between all these things and similar or analogous ones in your own country. You must be able to judge for yourself how far we in America are really in advance, and how far we are behind the progress and civilization of other nations; for the people of all countries are apt to be conceited, and to suppose, from the continued boasting they hear all around them, that their own is superior to every other. You, perhaps, are somewhat different; you seem to think

that in our country—at least in your part of it—we are not so well off as others in some important respects. It will be well, therefore, that you should see for yourself the condition of the population in other lands, so that you may form a really just comparison. After some years devoted to this kind of study and investigation, you will return home.

"I fear," said Hugh, smiling, "that supposing all these castles to be built of anything more substantial than air—supposing them to be resolved into solid realities—that if I found myself in Europe with a sufficient income, reasonably assured, I should falsify your sketch."

"Ah, you mean you could remain?"

"I think so."

"And I thought so—and that is precisely what you would have no right to do."

"No right? Not if I made my fortune by my own honest toil?"

"No."

"I think you combat your own theories there. You say that self-culture is our first and highest duty, but you would refuse the right to stay where such culture could be practised with the best advantage. Surely if the sight of all that is most ennobling and artistic in the works of the most cultivated of our species,—the monuments of architecture, of sculpture, of painting,—if the survey of what remains of the greatest achievements of our

race, ranging far back into the history of the past,—if the contemplation, on the spot, of the results which have arisen from the successes and the failures of dynasties,—if these are not the objects whose study is most conducive to self-improvement, what things are more so?"

"There are none, I suppose."

"But yet you would censure me for wishing to remain among them?"

"No; not if you were justified in living for yourself alone. But what human being is so justified? How, least of all can any one be justified in a country like this, where there is such vast work to be done, and so few to do it? Of what avail is your culture to be, if it is only to conduce to your own selfish gratification? How can any of us regard such opportunities of improvement—opportunities given us like talents to use for the benefit of all around us—if, like talents, they are to be wrapped up and put away in a napkin? No; you will see all you can, learn all you can, think all you can, and you will then return to give your country the benefit of what you have acquired."

"Virginia could not sympathize with all this," said Gifford, sadly.

"You ought to teach her then. If you have the fortune, or the wit to see and use noble means for raising, or aiding, or freeing your fellow-beings, that happiness, the purest and most sublime of which

humanity is capable, should be shared by her whom you swear to love, to cherish, and to protect."

"I would gladly do my duty; but natures—souls—are so very, very different. Could you teach Ike, there, to fancy Wordsworth, or Mr. Pangburn to appreciate the beauties of Tennyson? She is good, and gentle, and true; but I do not think she would understand such tastes as you describe, were I to strive ever so hard to teach them."

"Women are, nine times out of ten, more capable than your sex are disposed to believe. At least, you can try the experiment, and should you fail, you will not have yourself to blame. As for me——"

Marian paused, for the sun behind now caused some long shadows to darken the water before them, and she perceived that the company was more numerous than she had thought. A few paces off, and slowly descending the slope, were Luke Armstrong and Mr. Pangburn.

"Ye crags and peaks, I'm with ye once agin!" declaimed the latter; "I'd no idee there was such a pooty place on the Bar! Here, p'raps, the sedgy Injun once paddled his dusky canoe—here he barbecued his venison, and frizzled his taters, and had no man to make him afraid! No offence, I hope, none intended, public property, hey? 'And the 'hull company invited to a sylvan shade, sacred to love and water-paower!"

"I wouldn't have disturbed you, Mary Anne," said Luke, and there was a faint touch of reproach in his manner, "or you, Mr. Gifford, but there's letters jest come for both of ye, and I tho't you'd like to have 'em."

"Thank you very much, Luke," answered the girl, "you are always kind."

"Mr. Pangburn said he'd like to take a walk," continued Luke, half apologetically, "and so he come along."

"Hopin'," added that gentleman, sarcastically, "that his room ain't better than his company."

"The place is free to all, I suppose," said Hugh Gifford, coldly, "there are no monopolies here."

"No more they ought to be. What's the use of havin' a free country if ye ain't free to go where you like in it? The beauty of Californy, when I fust come to it, was that there weren't a fence the 'hull length and breadth of the land, 'cept *corrals* to stow the cattle in."

"This is for you, Mary Anne, and it looks as if it had a Eu*r*opean postmark. And this is for you, Mr. Gifford."

"Any intelligence of interest bein' understood to be bespoke for the Mountain Clarion," suggested Zelotes.

"I doubt whether mine will be of any service," said Marian, smiling, "since my correspondent is neither much interested in public affairs nor very

communicative; but, with your leave, I'll see what he says."

She walked quietly away as she finished; and Gifford, after receiving his own missive and thanking its bearer, as deliberately went in the same direction, and was seen to join and walk by Marian's side; whereupon Lion gravely arose, and, with measured steps, followed in their track; and Ike, quite as a matter of course, having withdrawn his vessel from the glassy water, proceeded to follow the dog. The two who were thus left behind, looked for a moment at the retreating figures and then at each other.

"That ere's kind o' sociable, ain't it?" commented Mr. Pangburn, grinning after the pair like a rat of an ironical turn. "Two's company and more isn't, eh? For I don't count that ere silly cuss nothink. Let on now, will ye, how long's young Bosting been sweet on the gal?"

"Sweet on her!" echoed Luke, half angrily, "he ain't—he can't be."

"It looks tarnation like it. Why can't he be?"

"Because it's impossible."

"Six o' one and half-a-dozen o' the other. Handsome gal—eyes like lightnin'—lips like coral—pooty bust—clipper-built all over. Young man silent and gloomy—stuck up, rather—no other gals round 'cept that pooty sister o' yourn, and she engaged to that ere backwoodsman and might do better: 'pears to me nateral these folks *should* be sweet."

"I tell you it's out of the question. She's too good; and I don't think, for that matter, that he's the man to do a real mean thing."

"Nuthin' mean 'bout bein' sweet, is there? That ain't what *I* call it. I never see a pooty gal yit who was too good to be cottoned up to."

"You don't understand," said the other, impatiently; "Hugh Gifford isn't his own man; he's engaged; engaged to be married to a young lady at home—his home—in Massachusetts."

"Thunder! Why didn't ye tell me that afore?"

"Tell *you!* Why should I?"

"What's a young feller like you up to, that lets a chap who's spoke for, lug a gal like that right away from under his nose? Where's yer spunk? If I weren't in somethin' like the same box as his'n—not," he added in the way of parenthesis, and gazing speculatively on Marian's form, now disappearing beyond the opposite slope, "not but what I *could* wriggle aout if I tried hard—referrin' to a young lady in Utiky—I'd try it on merself."

The blood mounted to Luke's brow, and he bit his lips to keep himself from an angry retort. Rough and uneducated as he was, he had delicacy and perception enough, independently of his own particular feelings, to be outraged by the incongruous association, even in idle words, of such a woman as Marian and the satyr-like creature beside him.

"You see," he explained, finally, "she's not a gurl

to flirt with any one in a common way; she knows too much. Her and him have read a good many of the same books—for he's got a sight o' book learnin'—and they like to talk together about 'em. Seein' every one knows he's engaged, and allers treated her so distant and respectful, it ain't nobody's business, I s'pose."

"And what does your sister Kitty and Miss Armstrong—what do *they* think about sech goin's on?"

"Think? Why they think the same's the rest on us, I take it, and mind their own business." And Luke began to walk slowly homewards. Mr. Pangburn was not unobservant of the flush on his companion's face and the tremor in his voice during this little discussion. But, partly to satisfy his curiosity, and partly from a love of small mischief in which he sometimes indulged, he essayed to resolve his doubts into certainty. He walked along in a reflective manner for a while and then said:—"Gals is allers kind o' risky when they're much with young fellers who talk 'bout books and poetry and sech things. There was a gal named Amanday Tomkins drownded herself in a well up our way, in Utiky, 'cause a married man—a dreadful talky, moony kind of a cuss—come round her in this same fashion, pretendin' to be single, and blowin' off steam 'bout pomes and sympathetic souls, and all this 'ere entanglin' sawder they go in for when they know reg'lar courtin' ain't down in the bill."

race, ranging far back into the history of the past,—if the contemplation, on the spot, of the results which have arisen from the successes and the failures of dynasties,—if these are not the objects whose study is most conducive to self-improvement, what things are more so?"

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diffidence and partly from good-nature, he had never more than faintly indicated such a thing. Besides, he knew of Hugh's engagement; and, moreover, his nature was not narrow enough to be lightly jealous. But now new thoughts had entered his mind; thoughts of apprehension and dismay; thoughts which led him to consider whether it was not a duty, somehow, to put Marian on her guard, even if apprehension should prove to be groundless. Even the wisest may sometimes be misled, and perhaps both the young girl and Hugh were going idly astray, merely for the want of some friendly and judicious warning. That such a warning would be given, if given at all, in the interest of his own even to himself scarce half-avowed hopes, Luke was well aware; but he was too unsophisticated to think of hesitating in what he once believed to be a duty, simply because of the risk of misconstruction.

Whether Mr. Pangburn had contemplated such a result as the product of his invidious suggestions,—whether he was impelled by curiosity, mere idle malice, or real dislike of the cool and distant manner wherewith Gifford always had treated him; or whether he was merely animated by the wish to pursue his studies in human nature,—certain it is that his words had produced considerable effect upon the mind of Luke Armstrong; sufficient, at all events, to hasten an explanation which that young man had often longingly contemplated, but which appeared to have

required some extraordinary stimulus before it could be brought about.

While this scene was passing between Luke and Zelotes, the letters which had arrived furnished occasion for an important explanation between Marian and Gifford. She had often said that her stay on the Bar would only last until midsummer—a period which she had fixed as likely to bring information which would seriously affect her whole future prospects. When Marian first sought the protection of Seth Armstrong, her paramount impulse was to fly—to find safety wherever it might be; and her idea of sustaining herself as a teacher or governess occurred very naturally afterwards. But at that time, in the absence of families, and in the heat and hurry of the race for lucre, there seemed little or no demand for such services as she could afford, and such attempts as she had made by advertising in the San Francisco newspapers had hitherto proved unavailing. On this the Armstrongs had pressed Marian to remain permanently among them, and she had so far consented as to agree to stay until midsummer—a consent, however, which was based on a step which she had previously resolved to take. In the hurry of her flight she had scarcely thought of a person to whom her thoughts were now directed as to one who might naturally be her counsel and guide: this was a very old friend of her father's, a man somewhat his senior, long settled as a lawyer at New Orleans. This

communicative; but, with your leave, I'll see what he says."

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subjects of polite-letters. By some mysterious chance in his erratic career he had been for a short time a theatrical critic or reporter for a western newspaper; and having naturally a retentive memory, and an imagination readily impressed by the swelling diction of the class of plays most favoured of occidental taste, he frequently drew upon this resource to eke out his own flowery periods. This, indeed, with a certain rough facility in catching fragments of popular verse, and in using the extraordinary slang so current with the inferior press—the hackneyed common-places about political subjects which rest upon the ear, and not upon the sense—his familiarity with a certain oratorical class-book known as "The American Speaker," together with his close acquaintance with the world as he had seen it, constituted the sum total of the weapons in Mr. Pangburn's intellectual armoury; but it could not fairly be denied that he used them with adroitness and effect. The Doctor, who, like many of his countrymen, exhibited an odd union of crabbedness and good-nature, often found his adversary so interesting as a psychological study as to quite disarm his animosity—a result which Zelotes very promptly and very naturally would attribute to his own controversial superiority.

"I kerry too many guns," he asserted, with his derisive leer; "I kerry too many guns for any o' these 'ere Britishers to stand afore. I jist pint 'em, I do, and tech 'em off loaded to the muzzle with

the principles of our glorious constitution rammed daown with the pole of liberty, and afore the smoke hists, the bloated advocates of tyranny has left and kin be heerd of from up a tree. *Sic semper tyrannis!* is the sentiments of Z. Pangburn, and the more they hev' to do with him the sicker they'll be."

"Stuff and nonsense," growled the Doctor. "You Yankees will never learn that your constitution owes all that is good in it, and your country too, to the mother land. As to the rebellion, it was an English rebellion against an un-English principle; because George the Third and his ministers violated the principle of their own country—no taxation without representation—and your ancestors fought for and vindicated that principle, you think your constitution and your government, both copied from the old models, are antagonistic to the English ones. Trash, sir, which every Yankee schoolboy ought to see through, and would, if you didn't fence them in and shut out the light by mountains of twaddle about tyranny and liberty, and rotten old despotisms, and the like. Let them read Chatham's speeches, or even Burgoyne's, for that matter, when he came to seek laurels in the forum he had lost in the field, and learn a bit of sense on the other side."

"There ain't no sense," retorted Zelotes, "nor yit no justice to be got out o' the minions of despots; and as to our constitution, it was made up bran new and slick to order by T. Jefferson and A. Hamilton.

If there's been any hookin' of idees it's been on your side, 'cause a selfish and corrupt aristocracy got skeered by the fierce haowls of a daown-trodden people. We air a curus people, and our idees is all of hum'; manufactur'. We air strong and vigorous, and we call no man master. We air young, but peert; and we don't go hautboying about for other folks' notions, when we kin git 'em as easy as rollin' off a log out o' the mint and coinage of our brains."

"There's nothing in your laws, your government, or your constitution," said the Doctor, stubbornly, "which is worth a fig for the happiness of mankind that Englishmen did not make perfect, assert, fight for, and die for, before Jefferson or Hamilton were born. And as for your youth, if there's any merit in it, you are as old a nation as the English, if not as old in America as they are in England. Crossing the ocean doesn't make a man younger, neither does it a people."*

"It makes him spryer and 'cuter," contended Mr. Pangburn, "and shows him a heap o' things he never heerd of, and ginerally enlarges the field of his intellectooal vision. It teaches him to shake off them 'ere degradin' superstitions and worm-eaten customs of the old world, which priests and lords air tryin' to keep a goin', so's to save their hides and

* The Doctor had apparently read Mr. Landor's Imaginary Conversations.

plunder, long arter the spirit of the age has called with a loud voice that it was time they went under. It teaches him that all mankind are equal by nateral right, and that distinctions that makes 'em different is the unnateral humbug of them that wants to set themselves up above their feller critters. It teaches him that we air the Ark of safety, the Hum' of Freedom, and the Haven of the Oppressed."

"There's good here, certainly," went on the Doctor, "as well as bad. But the good is nearly all English, and the bad you've invented among yourselves. There's no particular merit in developing the resources of a vast, rich country—resources which would almost develope themselves; and you've no right to credit for greatness of national character until the nation has been exposed to and has resisted temptation; until she's made sacrifices for the sake of right and a pure reputation, which prove the capacity and high-mindedness of her people. For all your good cause, the military strength of England would have overwhelmed you, had she not been set upon at the same time by nearly every nation in Christendom. The matter was well managed, but you wouldn't have carried the point single-handed. America had then, as she has had always, prodigious good luck, and her sons have gone about the world ever since praising themselves for a result for which they ought to give at least equal credit to Fortune."

"We don't give no credick to nobody," demurred

finished their labour and partaken of their evening meal, were chatting and smoking and reckoning the gains of the day. Pretty Kitty was sitting at one end of the porch listening—I fear not unwillingly—to the uncouth worshippings of Dick Railes. Her mother was sitting quietly within, reading her Bible, the usual occupation of her leisure moments. Ichabad was employed in elaborating some new ornament for his capricious head-gear, and Lion lay near by gazing with solemn intentness on the last red coal of the smouldering fire.

As for Marian, she stood at the door looking up as intently at the radiant heavens, and wondering, as most of us so often wonder, whether those mysterious and innumerable orbs could be peopled by beings like ourselves. She was brought back to earth by a low, pleading voice; a voice which, notwithstanding its accent, was not without music; a voice, however, which, even had it been dissonant, might have grown melodious when laden with the fulness of the heart whence it came. The words were simple enough:—

"You're not very busy, just now, Mary Anne?"

"Busy! No, indeed, as idle as indolence and this lovely evening can make me."

"You wouldn't mind"—and the voice was very low, almost cautious—"you wouldn't mind walking a few steps with me on the river-bank,—where—where you often walk with Mr. Gifford?"

they on me?' 'Beware my vengeance!' 'Kin it more than kill?' 'And is not that enough?' 'No, not enough; it cannot take away the grace of life, the comeliness of look which virtue gives, it cannot lay its hand on these no more than it kin shoot agen' the sun'!"*

"I don't see the force of the argu——"

"'When Freedom from her mounting height
Unfurled her standard to the air,
She tore the azoor robe of night,
And set the stars of glory there.'

"That's so!"

"But permit me to say——"

"'There's a fierce grey bird with a bendin' beak,
With an angry eye and a startlin' shriek,
That nurses her brood where the cliff flowers blow
On the precipice top in perpetooal snow.'

"That air a fact!"

"But slavery surely is——"

"'Stand! the ground's yer own, mer braves!
Will ye give it up to slaves?'

"——a grievous wrong and an infamous disgrace. A stain which until wiped out will always disgrace your flag."

"'Nail to the mast that tattered flag,
Set every threadbare sail,
And give her to the god of storms,
The lightnin' and the gale!'"

At some such point as this the Doctor would usually give up the argument, and the scene would conclude with a grand stump speech from the florid

* Excerpt from Mr. Sheridan Knowles' "William Tell."

Pangburn, by this time in a high state of patriotic fervor and poetic exaltation. It was not remarkable that so ingenious a politician should always adopt the plan suggested in the foregoing colloquy; that is to say, the plan of becoming lofty and obscure, not to say inconsequential, on getting into logical difficulties, or on being confronted with arguments he was unable or unwilling to refute. "The man's mad," the Doctor confidently assured me, "stark staring mad, and not worth talking to at all except in a professional way, to watch the progress of the disease. Your half-educated Yankee is the most impracticable of animals for believing in nothing he can't see, and trusting in nothing he doesn't understand. Look at that man Railes; I firmly believe he thought my theodolite was a toy, until he saw we really got with it the difference of level between the river and the Cañon. *That* was something tangible, and I think you might now persuade him that the instrument could throw a cannon-ball to the moon. This Editor of ours, with his Clarion and his Bedlamite spouting, is quite persuaded his country could take the whole world in hand to-morrow, and parcel it out like another Roman Empire. Luck and security, sir, will be the ruin of your people if they don't have some big, bouncing piece of misfortune to teach them common sense."

As I was of much the same way of thinking the Doctor and I did not quarrel, although I had the

pleasure of assisting at several of his encounters with his eccentric opponent. It may be well, before proceeding further, to explain how it was that I became personally interested in the diggings on Armstrong's Bar. The original object of my coming has been before mentioned as being that of determining the proper bounds and meets of a large tract of land, claimed under an ancient Spanish deed, whose holders had deputed me to act in their behalf. The data in my possession were such as to satisfy me very early respecting the extent of at least one boundary of the claim. This was on the river, and undoubtedly included the ground covered by the little settlement as well as their newly discovered gold-field in the interior. In the existing state of the country, however, a direct attempt to oust actual settlers was a critical and often an unsuccessful affair, and there were certain moot points to be resolved as to title, which would make such an attempt a very unwise one in this instance. This being the case, I did, as I thought, the safest thing for my principals, by first exhibiting the strength of their claim to the Armstrong Company, and subsequently entering into an agreement with them to forego any proceeding for the space of one year, subject to renewal and without prejudice to the real or supposed rights of either party, on condition of receiving a clear eighth of the gold they might gain from the soil. It was not without some discussion

that this conclusion was reached, nor altogether without pugnacious and litigious propositions on the part of Pangburn. But as it was clear that the claimants I represented could put the Company to great inconvenience and expense, if not force them to desist working on the claim altogether, prudence overcame all other emotions, and the arrangement proposed was quietly adopted.

CHAPTER X.

It was a soft, balmy evening in June, a riband or two of fading fire in the west showing where the sun had gone down, while in his place the moon was riding up the firmament in majestic yet chastened splendour. The day had been hot, and a light breeze which rustled about and scattered the delicate odour of blossoms whose parent vines clambered around the cabin, was all the more grateful for the close air which it disturbed. The same delicate odours which first told me that feminine cares must have been busy here still survived the burning heat of the sun, for the river was close by, and the fingers which had planted were careful to sustain with daily refreshment the thirsty strangers which otherwise would have drooped and withered.

Several of the party—and the Doctor and Hugh Gifford were among them—had been absent since early morning. They had set forth at daybreak for the saw-mill, some thirty miles off, and would return late at night. Work had gone on as usual in the Cañon, and those who remained behind having

finished their labour and partaken of their evening meal, were chatting and smoking and reckoning the gains of the day. Pretty Kitty was sitting at one end of the porch listening—I fear not unwillingly—to the uncouth worshippings of Dick Railes. Her mother was sitting quietly within, reading her Bible, the usual occupation of her leisure moments. Ichabad was employed in elaborating some new ornament for his capricious head-gear, and Lion lay near by gazing with solemn intentness on the last red coal of the smouldering fire.

As for Marian, she stood at the door looking up as intently at the radiant heavens, and wondering, as most of us so often wonder, whether those mysterious and innumerable orbs could be peopled by beings like ourselves. She was brought back to earth by a low, pleading voice; a voice which, notwithstanding its accent, was not without music; a voice, however, which, even had it been dissonant, might have grown melodious when laden with the fulness of the heart whence it came. The words were simple enough:—

"You're not very busy, just now, Mary Anne?"

"Busy! No, indeed, as idle as indolence and this lovely evening can make me."

"You wouldn't mind"—and the voice was very low, almost cautious—"you wouldn't mind walking a few steps with me on the river-bank,—where—where you often walk with Mr. Gifford?"

"Mind, Luke? Thank you, I shall be glad of a little stroll. Indeed I was only thinking of going there just now. It is a favourite walk of mine."

"I know it is."

They walked gently down the little lawn which trended to the stream, and turned into the path long worn smooth by footsteps along its bank. The water swam along in flecks and patches of black and silver, as the shadows fell or the moon-beams danced upon the tiny ripples. Higher and higher sailed the moon, and her light grew stronger until it seemed almost like the light of day. Some minutes passed of turning and returning,—for the slopes and the shrubbery made a promenade of a hundred yards or so most convenient,—and Luke spoke never a word. In truth the poor fellow felt that he was somehow approaching the most momentous crisis of his life, and even the first accents wherein his thoughts should shape themselves into expression became of exaggerated importance. He was naturally shy, too, and a nervous feeling of self-depreciation, a keener than common sense of his deficiencies, crept over him and added to his embarrassment. But he had watched sedulously for this opportunity —watched for it with not a little of the cool, steadfast perseverance of his countrymen—and he must not let it slip by unimproved. The words came at last, but they were slow and hesitating:—

"I jest wanted to say a few words to you, Mary Anne."

"Yes, Luke."

I wonder if any woman is ever altogether unconscious of the admiration she excites, that is, supposing her to be in daily contact with her admirer. It is doubtful; but if ever a woman was so unconscious, it was Marian now. Next her heart she carried a little Testament, which had been some months before the means of revealing Luke's secret to Hugh Gifford. Others might now and then have guessed it, albeit for an untutored, Luke was not a demonstrative man. But of all who ever thought of such a thing, Marian herself would have been the last. Still, when a young man asks a young woman to a moonlight walk, and, after a preface of solemn silence, begins to unfold his mind in terms such as Luke set forth with, there are few over whom would not flash a suspicion of what was to follow. Marian was not of the few; but she did not get her suspicion from what she remembered of Luke's words and tones in the past; it was begotten of what she recalled of Hugh Gifford's looks and tones when they referred to Luke. As she thought of these came another remark, or rather a question, which seemed somewhat irrelevant:—

"Mary Anne, you're fond of sister Kitty, ain't you?"

"What a question! Why, you know, Luke, she

is *my* sister, too. She has been always kind, and considerate, and affectionate. People who are left alone appreciate these things."

"Left alone?"

"Without friends—relatives—I mean. You know I am quite alone in the world."

"I knew you had no father or mother, Mary Anne," said Luke, gently.

"Neither father nor mother, sister nor brother; so that I think much of those who have made me half forget my loneliness. Of course I'm fond of Kitty. But then she is a good girl besides—a good daughter, dutiful and obedient—a girl of a frank, cordial nature, which would make me love her for herself, even if she had not been so very kind to me."

"Then I s'pose, Mary Anne, if you saw Kitty in any kind of trouble, in any kind of danger, you'd try to help—to save her?"

"To be sure I should."

"If you saw her wanderin' along a bank all covered with things that was bright and beautiful,—nice trees, and sparklin' brooks, and tumblin' waterfalls, full of singing birds and sweet smelling flowers, a place where she seemed to be as happy as the day is long,—you'd think it was kind o' sinful to disturb her there, wouldn't you?"

"And so it would be," acquiesced the girl, half smiling at Luke's unwonted poetry.

"But if you knew that over agen' the bank,—always yawnin', always threatinin', ready at any moment to swallow her up and destroy her, whenever chance or temptation should git her to make a single false step,—if you knew that right agen' the bank was a deep, black, horrid precipice, which, if she went over it, would crush her—ruin her for ever, now and hereafter—then you'd think you'd oughter take the risk of givin' her pain to save the greater risk of her destruction, wouldn't you, Mary Anne?"

"I should. I suppose most of us are at some time or another placed in a position where duty requires us to make such a choice. But this is mere laughing, surely. Dear Kitty can be in no such straits. You surely do not mean——"

"I don't mean that Kitty is in any danger. What I meant was only in example-like—allygurry—what mother is so often quoting from Scriptur', takin' one person's case to try on to another."

"And which of our little company is in a plight so critical?"

"I don't know for certain as any one is; but if I think so——"

"If you think so, you would say, you ought to put them on their guard?"

"That is jest what I would say."

"And I quite agree with you."

"You do?"

"Perfectly."

"But it ain't always easy to do such a thing. Even the kindest folks are sometimes hurt if one seems to meddle too much with their private affairs. It's hard to run the chance of hurtin' anybody's feelin's."

"No sensible person would be displeased at what must certainly be seen to be kindly meant. It would be a duty to incur such a risk as well as the other."

"You think so?"

"Unquestionably."

"I don't want to shrink from doin' a duty; and I think I'll hev' to do it."

"There is, then, a person here in the position you describe?"

"I said I only thought so, Mary Anne; and you said, if I thought so, I'd ought to put 'em on their guard."

"Well?"

"And I thought as much before: only I was glad to hear you say so, because the person——"

"Stop a moment, Luke. It may be quite correct that you should warn the person most interested, but it might not be altogether right that you should previously entrust the secret to another; you might be mistaken, and——"

"That's jest what I thought, that's jest what I hoped, Mary Anne; and that's the reason why

I spoke first about it to you. Heaven knows if I was mistaken how happy 'twould make me!"

"But how can I tell?"

"That's jest it, Mary Anne, you are the only one who *can* tell."

"The only one who can tell!"

"Yes; because this loved one wanderin' on the bank, this unsuspectin' one who's yit in such dreadful peril,—as I think, mind,—is——"

"Well, this person is——"

"This person is *you*, Mary Anne."

"Me!" cried Marian, in astonishment.

It had been very, very difficult for Luke to get thus far. The separate clauses of the little artifice, whereby he had led up to the critical accusation, had cost him a world of doubt, bewilderment, and embarrassment. But having accomplished this delicate step,—having crossed his Rubicon,—he cast restraint to the winds, and said what he had to say with all the blunt manliness of which he was capable:—

"I know there weren't a soul of us who crossed the plains fit for you to associate with except Hugh Gifford; I know he's eddicated and refined, and full of book learnin', and that you weren't brought up to mix with poor farmin' folks like us. You was always thoughtful, and too good to let any one see you know'd such a thing; but it's true for all that. And I know that Mr. Gifford's got a gift of talk,

and, when he likes, he can carry you away with him to Chinay, or to Europe, and put you in all kinds of beautiful places, and hang 'em round with all manner of enticin' and lovely colours! It was nateral you'd like his company, and that he'd like your'n. But don't be angry, Mary Anne, if I say there might be danger both of you might learn to like it too well, when it's remembered he's an engaged man! There might be danger both of you would forget this, and both be sorry for it ever after! Don't be hurt if I thought this was a precipice you might fall into; you have said yourself, you know, that no one could be displeased at what must be seen to be kindly meant!"

Marian was taken very much by surprise. Her bosom heaved, and the rich colour came and went in her face in a manner visible even by the moonlight; in a manner which to some would have been conclusive evidence of deeper feeling than even the speaker's words would seem to imply. She was taken by surprise, and, as people often do in such cases, she spoke, when a pause occurred, in a mechanical sort of way, her thoughts the while busy within, her voice somewhat changed, and her face somewhat averted:—

"Mr. Gifford and I are good friends,—no more. You mean kindly, Luke, and I am not displeased. But it seems strange that neither your mother nor your sister should ever have alluded to a subject

of justice and propriety about them which made separation quite essential to her self-respect. The situation had been a singular one, and, isolated as they were, it was easy to suggest excuses for educated people who found pleasure in each other's society; but when once such a thing was marked enough to excite comment, it was time to bring it to a close. When the girl looked into her heart too, and found how painful this impending close was like to be, she was more than ever persuaded of its strict necessity. Marian was impulsive, truly, but her nature was eminently conscientious. She had never yet, to her knowledge, wronged man or woman; and she would not begin by wronging Virginia Chester.

As to Gifford himself, he strove long and earnestly in his quiet, stubborn way, against her departure. The idea of utter separation—a separation which was almost certain to be an eternal one—filled him with consternation and dismay. Without contemplating any wrong to his affianced bride, he was yet bitterly averse to being parted from what was a continual temptation to commit it. He knew very well the force of this temptation; but he pushed it away from his immediate thoughts, and wished to glide on in the old course, that the coming months might be similar to the ones just passed. It is needless to say that he was more selfish than Marian; that is obvious enough; but his selfishness by no means went the length of dreaming to entrap

her affections, situated as they both were. He was too manly for that; but he thought they might continue in the way they had been indefinitely, without any assignable limit, and without the intervention of any disagreeable observation or explanation; and seeing no reason for her going excepting that which she advanced, namely, her resolve to be independent and at work, he strove against it by every argument in his power.

And so he might have continued to strive but for the altered demeanour of Luke. The alteration was not so marked as to excite any general comment; but Gifford knew in his heart of hearts that the kind-souled young rustic was Marian's secret worshipper. When he found Luke's laugh was becoming less frequent, when he saw the broad smile which formerly lighted Luke's face replaced by an expression of patient sorrow, Hugh began to ask himself mental questions, and was not long in guessing at something like the truth. Arrived at this, his wishes experienced a radical change. He had no right to be jealous, and he knew it. But he had a strange dread of the effect upon Marian's generous nature, which the sight of poor Luke's simple distress might bring about. Many a woman before her time had been melted by pity to concessions which would never have been wrought by love; and Hugh, with all his faults, was not coxcomb enough to suspect that there existed in himself

and smaller. For many weeks before, the days had ranged from thirty to fifty ounces, and, during one week, had exceeded the latter average; but now the return sank by nearly one half, and on the Friday the miners brought home but ten ounces. On that evening—one of the three last Marian was to spend at the Bar—Hugh had spoken again in his discontented way about seeking his fortune elsewhere:—

"I shall be sorry to think of your leaving the Armstrongs," said Marian, "now that I am going from among them."

"You cannot suppose that the attractions here are increased by your departure," replied Gifford, looking sadly out upon the river.

"Nay, I wasn't thinking of myself, but of you. I don't think you quite fit to go among strangers."

"Fit? I? who am naturally one of the most solitary of human beings?"

"You are solitary when among others, perhaps, but there are few human beings, for all that, who need others more than you need them."

"Your riddle, Marian?"

"Why, what is the whole story of your life as you have told it me, but the history of an unsatisfied craving for sympathy? You think yourself in love with solitude, only because your soul is out of tune with those around you; and you people

the solitude with spirits more harmonious. Is it not so?"

"And will ever be, I fear," he answered gloomily.

"You must *make* your future, Gifford," said Marian, earnestly, "and you will not do so by indulging in idle repinings; you cannot by such change your barren, white-washed meeting-house into Westminster Abbey; a change which is a type, in a manner, of what were needed to satisfy you; nor can you metamorphose those who surround you into idealized creatures who should minister to your intellectual requirements. But you can unlock the gates and overleap the barriers which separate you from these and more than these. You must exert, and that right resolutely, Will, Industry, Self-Denial; they will infallibly lead you to Strength, Usefulness, and Power."

"Not without money, Marian. We reason ever from opposite poles, I fear. You have looked upon a social condition alone, where all who have any right to be ambitious are provided with wealth, as a matter of course, to begin with; I upon another, where all may be as ambitious as they will, but for whom the only goal—the sole qualification without which you are nothing, with which you are everything—is wealth to end with."

"Get the gold to begin with, then, and press onward to something nobler!"

"A man is unfit for anything nobler who gets

"And we should render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's," said the Doctor. "Agreed. Far be it from me to derogate from his well-earned laurels; I only meant to imply that it was through the gift of nature, rather than by toilsome acquisition, that he gained them so readily. So all hail, Pangburn, with all my heart!"

"This is the last countin' you'll see, Mary Anne," said Seth, sorrowfully, "onless, which we all much hope, ye see fit to come back home among us once agin."

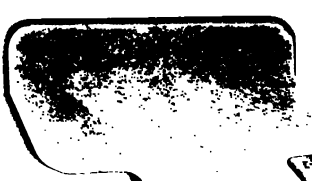
"Miss Rooke will soon yearn for country life," said the Doctor; "she will soon tire of the feverish town, which, from all accounts, is more like an infant Pandemonium than anything else, and come back to the peace and quiet of the Bar."

"I have warned her what she has to expect," said Gifford; "but, like most ladies, she must see for herself. She will at least find more of the comforts of civilization there, if few of its other blessings. This is hardly an establishment which presents attractions to any except such enforced gold-seekers as can hope for no better."

"We're goin' to better of it soon," remarked Luke, humbly, "and put up stables where the *corral* is, and storehouses in place of the huts where the Irishmen lived."

"Arter two or three months more," added Seth, prudently, "arter two or three months more, when

we was also thinkin' of puttin' up a wooden roof instead of a cotting one, with other modern improvements. But come, boys, fly round and git up the chist. We must jest stow away what we've got, if it ain't such a mighty week's work. Hist out the chist, boys, and Mother, fetch us out the keys."

In their accustomed corner, over the trap-door, lay Lion and Ike, both of whom, having been fast asleep, seemed to think it highly unnecessary and absurd that they should be disturbed. However, they consented to give way, and the door having been raised, Luke and Dick Railes lifted the treasure-box from its place. It was set on the table as usual, and Mrs. Armstrong having brought the keys and the gains of the past week from a chest of drawers in the inner room, her husband unlocked the heavy padlock and opened the trunk. There lay the tin box, in the middle, with the various little bags of nuggets and the curious specimens of crystals and gold-bearing quartz arranged about its sides.

Seth now proceeded to unlock the inner sanctuary, the tin box wherein the precious dust, the fruit of their accumulated months of labour, was every week deposited. There were six little bags of buckskin, each containing from ten to five-and-twenty ounces, which were now to be added to the capital store. But as the old man opened the box his jaw dropped, his eyes dilated, and he staggered back as if he had been shot.